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The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia

By

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE AND HISTORY

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FOREWORD

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This work in the study of the Negro in the reconstruction of Virginia, like that of a similar study of South Carolina, was made possible by a research grant from Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. *The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction* has made us think. In a review of this work, Prof. Carl Russell Fish said: "The book in its totality is convincing in its thesis that the story of reconstruction is not yet told." This thought has been expressed also by other historians who have read this treatise. In this treatment of *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia*, the author has also rendered a valuable service, if he has done nothing more than to direct attention to other neglected aspects of this period.

The history of Virginia during the stormy period differs from that of South Carolina. The former was one of the commonwealths the least affected by the upheaval; the latter was thoroughly dominated by the Negro, "carpet-bag," "scallawag" elements. The two treatises studied together, then, will give a fair picture of the rôle played by the Negro at that time throughout the country. In this light the Negro appears as a participant in an upheaval rather than as a disturbing factor in a foreign atmosphere. What we have had of the reconstruction heretofore has been too close to the period to approach dispassionate presentation. In this work the author has certainly shown the necessity for scientific treatment.

CARTER G. WOODSON

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE NEGRO IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF VIRGINIA

INTRODUCTION

This treatment of the Negro in the reconstruction of Virginia, like that of a similar study of this element in South Carolina, is another effort to invite attention to a neglected aspect of our history. South Carolina has been commonly regarded as the most unfortunate of the rehabilitated States and Virginia as one of the commonwealths the least affected thereby. The two studied together will present this drama from slightly different points of view and will thus offer a better opportunity for grasping the significance of the whole movement.

The Negroes never had complete control of any of these States, but they figured conspicuously in the government of South Carolina while they appeared to much less effect in that of Virginia. The facts show clearly that in each case the Negroes, although enjoying some of the spoils belonging to the victors, served largely as instruments in the hands of two militant factions of the whites. Bitter feeling developed against the Negroes because, in trying to prevent the debasement of their status to that of serfdom, they cooperated with the representatives of the party championing their emancipation. The Negroes were not even then so lacking in penetration as to believe that the white reconstructionists were as much interested in the freedmen as they were in securing and retaining political control of these States and of the nation. The Negroes merely accepted what they considered the lesser of two evils.

Inasmuch as the native whites were already embittered against the Negroes on account of the property loss they had suffered in their emancipation, the additional hate growing out of the part they played in the political sphere made their situation far from desirable. There followed, then, the de-

velopment of almost every sort of agency available in working out plans for the immediate or the ultimate undoing of the new regime. The thought of the native whites as expressed through the press, the pulpit, and the schools, immediately after the emancipation, was boldly reactionary. Every effort of the military or Federal agents to rehabilitate the State along democratic lines was loudly denounced as a step toward superimposing unpopular government. Anything with even the appearance of exalting the Negro to the status of full citizenship was continuously ridiculed as an effort to make a black man equal to a Caucasian. In the midst of the contest the shortcomings of the Negro were repeatedly brought before the public to show the utter impossibility of granting him civic rights. On the other hand, the racial characteristics of the white man which, it was said, made him superior to other races were characteristically emphasized. The attitude of the whites did not really change even after the reconstruction was actually carried out in the manner so unsatisfactory to the aristocracy. Although compelled to become silent in their attacks to some extent, they nevertheless expressed this same feeling as far as the new order of things permitted the exercise of such freedom of speech.

During this period, and since then, persons having the point of view of the native whites have endeavored to write the history of the reconstruction largely from such biased materials. Some of these writers are the descendants of the very participants in the contest. Other valuable matter, as limited investigation will show, was available; but the facts were selected as a means to an end. Restricting their treatment largely to political strife, they have made out the best case possible for the questionable means employed by their friends and relatives in restoring caste. Some few of these, too, treat negatively the economic and social aspects of the period, showing how the native whites suffered from interference from without and from the social pretensions of the Negroes.

Practically all of these biased authors mention the "vagran-
cy and idleness of the freedmen." The very sources upon

which they have based such statements and common observation of any one who knew anything about these States at that time, however, easily prove that the Negroes were the actual laborers. The large majority of whites had never learned to work. They outnumbered the Negroes in Virginia two to one. Neither the Negroes nor their friends hindered the native whites from working. On the contrary, they suffered themselves almost to be reduced to starvation rather than take the positions vacated by Negroes. While treating the disinclination of the Negroes to work just after freedom, fair-minded authors would have written equally as much on the laziness of the whites in the midst of this crisis. During that period and even today, in fact, at all times in the South, the burden of labor has fallen largely upon the shoulders of the Negroes.

Treatises thus written out of the mouths of spokesmen biased by antagonistic feelings are without value in the study of the history of this period except so far as they present the argument of one side of the case. What the native whites thought of the Negro, what they said in denouncing him, and what means they employed to eliminate him from politics, are questions of importance which the historian must take into account. If, however, he restricts himself in *ex parte* fashion to an investigation and discussion of such efforts alone, he will do the cause of truth unusual harm.

Examples as to how this may work out are not wanting. A few years ago a student entering the field of reconstruction history under a professor in one of our accredited universities was asked to restrict himself altogether to the social and economic aspects of the question because the political side of it has already been well done. And this is actually the case among the majority of historians now directing such studies in our advanced institutions of learning. They really believe that the history of the reconstruction has been written. Any statement to the contrary is regarded as heresy. The authorities have spoken *ex cathedra*. Exactly how teachers of history could come to such a conclusion when the works themselves show that they are largely restricted to the dis-

cussion of one aspect of that history and of the rôle played by one element only, is a problem itself. Such is the case, however, and it is a serious reflection on American historical scholarship.

The work herein presented does not presume to cover all of these neglected aspects of the history of the reconstruction. The effort here is to deal with the Negro as a participant in the remaking of Virginia. A number of other valuable narratives could be written to show the actual efforts of the native whites cooperating in the rehabilitation and of the Northern men serving as the leaders of the reconstructionists. Hitherto the writers in this field have merely vilified these elements in supplying us with the crimes of the few to justify the crimes of others.

To write the history of the Negroes in Virginia for any period prior to their social uplift, however, is a difficult task. In the first place, immediately after the war they had not sufficient ability to edit newspapers and publish books in which their efforts might have been recorded. In the development of this subject the writer had to rely to some extent upon the sources from which biased treatises of the reconstruction have been written. Unfortunately, in the newspapers, books, and the like of the native whites there is only scant mention of the Negroes except in the case of those who were so closely attached to the former by ties of friendship and menial service that they cooperated with them politically. Such exceptions were domestic servants, barbers, porters and the like. As a rule, no Negro however intelligent could receive honorable mention in any publication of the native whites, if he were known to be a leader among the reconstructionists. All such Negroes, regardless of their attainments, were generally branded as degraded and unworthy. In the independent Negro the native whites saw practically nothing worthy of praise. Some of the most intelligent Negroes then active were thus portrayed. The extent to which such leaders rallied the forces against the native whites was the index to the measure of wrath poured out upon them.¹ For this reason, therefore,

¹ *Enquirer*, Aug. 11, 1866; May 27, 1867.

the investigator must be very careful in examining the records of those who received praise from the native whites.

The manner in which the native press referred to the neutral Negroes or to those recognized as their political allies is interesting.² On December 10, 1866, the *Enquirer* displayed in a conspicuous position that a certain Negro preacher of the city had been arrested for seducing the daughter of Lomax Smith. An investigation shows that the report was an exaggeration. The preacher had done no more than to say to the girl that in spite of the objection of her parents she could marry at his home the Negro soldier whom she loved. He had offered her asylum.³ The *Enquirer* took this attitude toward both the minister and the soldier because of its hate for the Negro military and especially for this Negro minister assisting in organizing the Negroes along independent political lines. Lomax Smith, too, was a popular barber among the native whites. When Smith's home was burned, the paper published his needs to the city urging the people to assist him because he was a man who had borne a good reputation among "leading gentlemen of our city, among whom he is no less a personage than the honorable Joseph Mayo."⁴ This paper emphasized the fact that Smith had been sagacious enough to know that the Southern gentleman was the truest friend of the Negro. Fox, another such Negro barber, and Lomax Smith were desirable Negroes because they did not join with the freedmen in the formation of military companies and the drilling and blowing of horns. Fox was even discharging his apprentices who took part in these things.⁵

Some other examples are interesting. On June 8, 1870, the *Daily Dispatch* thus displayed the notice of the passing of a Negro of this class as the DEATH OF A RESPECTABLE COLORED MAN: "Lemuel Bowser, an old and much esteemed colored citizen of Richmond, died in this city on Monday night. There are but few colored men of Richmond who

² *Enquirer*, July 20, 1866; Jan. 3, Aug. 8, 16, Sept. 3, 1867; *Dispatch*, Feb. 16, 1871; Jan. 22, Feb. 4, April 5, Dec. 31, 1875; May 9, July 22, Sept. 8, 1876; Jan. 30, Feb. 27, 1877; June 22, 1878; April 25, 1879.

³ *Enquirer*, Dec. 10, 1866.

⁴ *Enquirer*, July 20, 1866.

⁵ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1866.

enjoyed more cordial esteem and universal respect than Lemuel Bowser did. A gentleman by association and raising, he treated all persons with the same respect he himself commanded, and, kind by nature, he won upon all with whom he was associated. He was a colored man who has under all circumstances preserved the kindly relations which existed between the white and colored people of Virginia in the olden time. He was a celebrated caterer and his achievements in this line made him well known and popular among the first men of his day.”⁶

On March 22, 1871, similar space was given to the account of the death of the wife of Thomas C. Campbell, “the highly respected colored barber of Staunton.”⁷ The funeral was attended by “a large number of white persons as a mark of respect for the character of the deceased, and of her bereaved husband and family.” The funeral services were conducted by the Reverend George B. Taylor, chaplain of the University of Virginia, who came to the city for this particular purpose.

Referring to another as a sensible Negro pastor, the *Enquirer* said on September 3, 1866: “The Reverend Harrison Scott has changed his field of labor from this city to Danville. His teachings were always conservative, and we regret to lose such guides to our negro population, but hope he will exercise a good influence in his new position.”⁸ When the *Dispatch* reported the death of this same minister on October 1, 1875, it said: “Mr. Scott, as everybody called him, had been pastor here for about seven years, and was popular with the whites and the blacks. It is somewhat remarkable that he was not known ever to have meddled in politics.”⁹

Publishing an account of the death of the Rev. Scott Gwathney on April 25, 1879, the *Dispatch* said: “He is represented as having been a good man and a faithful Christian, and was respected by all who knew him, and on more than one occasion he has given the colored people of Richmond some good advice. He eschewed politics and kept away from political meetings.”¹⁰

⁶ *Dispatch*, June 8, 1870.

⁷ *Ibid.*, March 22, 1871.

⁸ *Enquirer*, Sept. 3, 1866.

⁹ *Dispatch*, Oct. 1, 1875.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, April 25, 1879.

A word, then, with respect to this particular class of Negroes will not be out of place. The facts make it clear that although occupying servile positions they were often more intelligent and better circumstanced than the freedmen far removed from the native whites. This class of Negroes belonged in the main to the element known before the Civil War as the free persons of color. Such Negroes were permitted to remain in the South on sufferance during the darkest days of slavery. They had to be vouched for by influential white men. Thus obligated to the native whites who were inalterably opposed to the reconstruction of the States on the basis of the full citizenship of the Negroes, these dependent freemen of color did not find it easy to sever the ties which had held them together during the days when the friendship of the master class was their greatest asset. It should be noted, moreover, that because of their superior status during the days of slavery these descendants of the free persons of color considered themselves socially superior to the freedmen in the rough, who, according to the whites, had gone wild with their sudden freedom.¹¹ This line of cleavage, of course, was not easily removed. Such Negroes could not readily see the need for a change of policy, and it was not to the interest of the native whites so to inform them.

While this was the situation at first in many parts it was not always the same slavish devotion, and it did not long continue anywhere. Discussing this matter on April 17, 1867, under the caption of FREEMEN AND FREEDMEN, the *Petersburg Index* said: "The feeling existing between these two classes of the colored population of this city is not of the most harmonious character. The latter, though the most numerous, seems to be looked upon by the former as a degree inferior to themselves, and as naturally subject to their control; and all their movements inaugurated since the passage of the Reconstruction Bill indicate that they intend to use them for the advancement and promotion of the ambitious and aspiring men of their own party."¹²

¹¹ *Enquirer*, Jan. 9, May 27, 1867.

¹² *Ibid.*, April 17, 1867.

CHAPTER I

FREEDOM IN A STRUGGLE WITH SLAVERY

At the outbreak of the Civil War, certain western counties of Virginia refused to secede from the Union. These counties immediately took steps resulting in organizing at Wheeling a new State known as West Virginia. The State government was nominally re-established in loyal territory. After thus complying with the requirement of the Federal Constitution that a State must consent to the erection of a new State within its borders, the truncated Restored Government of Virginia retired to certain eastern territories which the Federal forces had recovered.¹ The seat of the government was established at Alexandria, in which the first legislature met in 1863.²

Before the end of the war, this government called a convention to revise the constitution of Virginia. In February, 1864, there assembled in Alexandria such a body consisting of fifteen delegates from twelve counties. Some of the constitutional revisions related to the exercise of suffrage. One changed the residential requirement of voters from three years to one year. Others disfranchised persons who had held either civil or military offices under the Confederate Government of Virginia, but excepted such county officers. Persons offering to vote, moreover, were required to take oath to support the Constitution of the United States as the supreme law of the land, to support the Restored Government of Virginia, and to swear that they had not willingly supported the rebellion since January 1, 1864. But the most important changes related to the abolition of slavery and the regulation of the freedmen. Proclaiming the end of slavery and involuntary servitude, except for crime, this body empowered county courts to apprentice Negro children on the same terms

¹ For the early history of the "Restored Government of Virginia" see Hall's *Rending of Virginia*; and the *Journal of Negro History*, VI, 131-173.

² Taxes for the support of this government were collected in Alexandria, Fairfax, Loudoun, Northampton and Accomac counties, and in Norfolk and Portsmouth. *Virginia Senate Journal*, 1863-1865, 83.

provided by law for white, and the legislature was prohibited from making any law establishing slavery or recognizing property in persons.³ Finally the revised constitution was submitted to the people and ratified by a few hundred votes.

At the close of the war, however, events brought about a state of suspense. The assassination of Lincoln caused the elevation of Andrew Jackson to the presidency. Military authority was supreme in Virginia. No one knew whether the Restored Government would be recognized as legal. In the meantime, people in different communities commenced to hold popular meetings urging the reestablishment of civil government. A. H. H. Stuart has emphasized the importance of such a meeting held in Augusta County, May 8, 1865.⁴ But the restoration of civil government was effected earlier than some expected. This came on May 9, 1865, in President Johnson's executive order "to re-establish the authority of the United States and to execute the laws within the geographical limits known as the State of Virginia." This proclamation pronounced the whole Confederate regime a nullity; made general provisions for the restoration of Federal authority in the State; gave instructions for the disposition of property subject to confiscation; and recognized as legal the Restored Government of Virginia. Besides, the aid of the Federal Government was pledged to Francis H. Peirpont, recognized as Governor of Virginia, "so far as may be necessary in the lawful measures which he may take for the extension and administration of the State government."⁵ Soon thereafter the President issued a proclamation of amnesty extending clemency to all but the most extreme secessionists who might seek clemency, and, upon good behavior, obtain a pardon.

Virginia, then, possessed a *de jure* state government. This was removed from Alexandria to Richmond, where the

³ See article IV of the Constitution, sections 19 and 21.

⁴ A. H. H. Stuart, *A Narrative of the leading Incidents of the Organization of the first Popular Movement in Virginia in 1865 to reestablish peaceful Relations between the Northern and Southern States and of the Subsequent Efforts of the "Committee of Nine" in 1869 to secure the Restoration of Virginia to the Union*, 8-15.

⁵ *Whig*, May 13, 1865.

legislature met in an extra session on June 19, 1865. Governor Peirpont communicated his message to the body. After reviewing the situation in the State, he submitted several important recommendations. These included the request for a law establishing the institution of marriage among Negroes, and the abrogation of the disfranchising clause of the constitution of 1864. The General Assembly accordingly passed, among other measures, an act submitting to the electorate at the next election the question of empowering the legislature to alter or amend the disfranchising article in question.⁶ Another measure passed at this session prescribed the means for the proposed reenfranchisement. Those under such disability could have it removed by taking the President's amnesty oath of May 29, 1865, and an oath to uphold and defend the Restored Government of Virginia. Furthermore, it was provided "that the persons excluded by the terms of the proclamation from the benefits thereof, excepting those embraced in the thirteenth class of such excluded persons, shall not be entitled or qualified to vote as aforesaid unless pardoned by the President, as provided for by said proclamation."⁷ Referring to the policy of Andrew Johnson, the General Assembly passed the joint resolution: "Resolved by the General Assembly of Virginia, That the general policy of the present Federal Administration, and especially its policy in regard to reconstruction in Virginia, is eminently wise, just and proper, and merits the warm approval of the loyal people of Virginia."⁸

The State government, while thus eager to restore suffrage rights to former secessionists, took no official action on the enfranchisement of the Negroes. Such an uncompromising Union man as John Minor Botts, moreover, was reported hostile to Negro suffrage. Thus the *Alexandria Gazette* of June 22, 1865, reported, saying: "Mr. Botts is said to be opposed to negro suffrage, and he does not indorse the exclusion of any part of the white population entitled to vote under the old State laws. . . . He thinks the oath is administered

⁶ *Acts of the General Assembly*, Extra Session, June, 1865, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, last page.

at the wrong end. It should be tendered not to the voter, but to the officer.”⁹ In this case Botts was not far in advance of the subdued secessionists.

A correspondent of *The Nation* reported as follows in 1865 the sentiments expressed by one of this class in announcing himself a candidate for office: “I shall favor and encourage the emigration and colonization of the negro population as a measure calculated, under present circumstances, to promote the interest of both races, as well as the repeal of all laws for the confiscation of the property of those who co-operated with the South in the late terrible struggle between the two sections of this country. . . . I shall oppose any law or amendment of the Constitution of the United States having a tendency to give to the negro the right of suffrage, or to so change his status as to place him upon terms of equality with the white man.”¹⁰ He could see no necessity for continuing in the limits of the State armed forces of the United States, and would do all he could to effect their removal.

Virginia Negroes, moreover, were divided on this question. The freedmen had sentiments like those of the liberal reconstructionists, but a few free people of color, some of them former slaveholders themselves, supported the claims of the Bourbons. Referring in 1865 to an interview with two Negroes, one a freedman and the other a free person of color, a traveler said: “I asked them what they thought of the immediate enfranchisement of the negro. One of the two men was in favor of it, and urged all the ordinary arguments in support of it. Unless his people obtained a share of political power, they would have no protection against rapacity and oppression. They would always be kept in poverty and ignorance. They would become a class most dangerous to the peace of society. Nor should rebels be allowed to make laws for Union men. His friend did not think the Negroes in Virginia were fit to exercise the right of suffrage immediately, nor that they would be for some years. Most of them knew nothing about the country. Virginian politics had done nothing but get worse and worse ever since the State, some

⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 22, 1865.

¹⁰ *The Nation*, I, 270.

fifteen or twenty years ago, adopted a more democratic constitution, and let every man cast a vote who was able to bear arms. The gentlemen couldn't get anywhere near the polls on election day, and the men who knew nothing and were worth nothing had everything their own way. The other replied that, unless such men had the right of voting, they never would know anything or be worth anything, and that, at any rate, they had taxes to pay. It would be the same, he said, with the negroes. The convention, both thought, would go no further than to ask that, if ignorant white men were allowed to vote, ignorant black men should have the same privilege. On that point the two men were at one, but they differed still as to the question whether all men, without the distinction of color, should have the right of suffrage, or only the intelligent men of both races. They agreed, too, that there was very faint hope of the convention's¹¹ being able to effect anything in reference to that matter, whatever good might flow from its efforts to obtain a system of laws regulating the price of labor."¹²

The Restored Government made a feeble attempt to shape its policy in accordance with the mean between these extremes. Yet its policy aroused the opposition of a strong element of Virginia Unionists. Under the date of June 30, 1865, the "Union Association" published an important address. The document set forth that "the disloyal element of our population largely outnumbering the loyal element, and determined to rule the State, almost universally subscribed to the oath required of voters by the Alexandria Constitution; and men who up to that time had openly professed allegiance to the rebel State Government at Richmond, and to the so-called Confederate States, and who had contemptuously repudiated the Restored Government of Virginia, and the Government of the United States, came forward and took the oath just in time to run for office, and to vote. Such men, with one or two exceptions, were elected to the Legislature, and precisely such men, without any exception, would

¹¹ Convention here means the much talked-of body which finally framed the new constitution for Virginia.

¹² *The Nation*, I, 137.

have been elected to Congress, had the Congressional elections been held.”¹³

In order to prevent the complete domination of the State government by secessionists, the address proposed that Congress regard the government of Peirpont as provisional and authorize the State to call a convention to amend the old constitution, or to frame a new one. This convention should be chosen by the loyal people of the State without distinction of color, and from which all who had voluntarily aided the rebellion should be excluded, either as members or electors. It was proposed that the State be organized into a provisional or territorial form of government, upon a plan that would best guarantee the enjoyment of the civil rights and the peaceable pursuit of the ordinary avocations of the people, and the emancipation of the blacks from the control of their masters. This plan should provide for the education of the Negroes that they might enjoy civil rights. All of this was proposed to the end that a State government when finally established might be upon a basis which would protect the rights of all, and “afford additional guarantees for the perpetuation of that Union which a gigantic war of four years duration had been waged, to defend and secure.”¹⁴

The Unionists generally opposed reactionary control of the State government. The nucleus of Union men who had cooperated with Peirpont in maintaining his truncated government in Northern Virginia contended that on going to Richmond he had tended to abandon the loyal men in favor of the secessionists. Other unconditional Union men held meetings, in which they condemned the policy of the Restored Government. At such a meeting held at Winchester, June 28, 1865, resolutions were adopted expressing dissatisfaction with the course pursued by the State administration. Others memorialized the President, protesting against the removal of the disfranchising restrictions against secessionists, and requesting legislation to bar such persons from office.^{14a} This

¹³ *Address of Loyal Virginians to their Friends in the North* (Alexandria, Va., June 30, 1865), 3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7. The address was signed by a correspondence committee consisting of S. Ferguson Beach, Lysander Hill, and W. J. Cowing.

^{14a} See Virginia newspapers for July, 1865.

movement was political rather than prompted by any such thing as a desire to take care of the freedmen.

The action of the Restored Government, moreover, completely disappointed the freedmen. They had expected to be granted the rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by others. They made known this view in their convention, held in Alexandria, in August, 1865. The body reviewed "the indignities, brutalities and inhumanities" to which the Negroes were subjected as slaves. It asserted that a large number of Virginians bore the Negroes an undeserved malice because they were black, and had been freed by the United States Government. As a protection against such people, the freedmen demanded the rights, privileges and immunities common to citizens, including the right to vote. The freedmen declared that they were prepared to exercise the suffrage intelligently; and they pledged their loyalty to the interests of the State and to the United States. They presented a claim to citizenship on the ground that they should not be regarded as a separate class, but granted the considerations prayed as an evidence of the natural equality of all men.¹⁵

But even the protests of the Unionists availed nothing immediately. These memorials, moreover, ran counter to the purposes of the overwhelming majority of white people in the State. The press of Virginia denounced the efforts of the Unionists. It became bitter and vituperative toward the Federal Government itself. At one time or another such journals as the *Times*, the *Examiner*, the *Whig* and *Bulletin* had to be temporarily suppressed. But, as a rule, the press lauded the reconstruction policy of President Johnson, and endorsed the course of Governor Peirpont.

The people anxiously participated in the State and Congressional election held on October 12, 1865. The reactionaries were triumphant. The legislature was authorized to amend the suffrage article of the constitution. A number of former secessionists were sent to the legislature. There were elected to Congress several men who could not take the test oath.

¹⁵ The convention met on August 3, 1865. See accounts in the *Norfolk Post* and the *Norfolk Day Book*, August 7, 1865.

When Congress assembled in December, 1865, however, the Congressmen-elect from Virginia were not seated. But the reactionaries sent to the General Assembly assumed their duties without such interference. The body was representative of Virginia public opinion as shown by the election of John B. Baldwin, a former member of the Confederate Congress, as Speaker. After hurriedly repealing the suffrage restrictions imposed by the constitution of 1864, the legislature began a consideration of other public questions.

The labor question was perhaps of paramount importance. The belief was widespread that the free Negro would not work without compulsion. The Negroes had not immediately applied themselves as free laborers, as the sources attest. As late as November 4, 1865, the Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia issued a stern order directing agents to require Negroes to enter more generally into labor contracts with planters and others willing to employ them. It was directed that the responsibilities of freedom be urged upon the Negroes; and agents were instructed to treat as vagrants all able-bodied freedmen refusing to accept employment at reasonable terms. The freedmen were to be guaranteed protection in their rights, but forced to sustain themselves and keep their contracts.¹⁶

Encouraged, perhaps, by the character of this order, the reactionaries boldly advocated compulsory labor legislation. Referring to the "universal practice" of Negroes to disregard the binding character of contracts, the *Richmond Times* stated that they could be made to enter into contracts and keep them only by appropriate legislation. The journal asserted "that in this State the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau have done all that was possible to correct this great and universal evil, but, in the absence of legislation upon the subject, they have been able to accomplish very little." The *Times* urged that legislation should be passed to protect the freedmen in his rights; but, at the time, the General Assembly should enact laws, the terrors of which should be arrayed with so much solemnity upon the side of the respect for contracts that "Cuffee" should be taught that the worst

¹⁶ *Richmond Times*, November 8, 1865.

thing he can do in this world, short of murder, burglary and larceny, was to violate them deliberately.¹⁷

The public gave little attention to the causes prompting the Negro not to work on the contract basis. Some of the Negroes objected to this system because it too much resembled slavery, and they believed that they might earn more independently. The work was heavy; the hours were long; and the weather was hot, causing much sickness. The small pay offered by planters did not encourage them to make contracts. The compensation was generally five dollars a month, although wages were higher where labor was scarce. In addition to money-wages, however, the laborers received rations, and often free shelter and firewood. Some had the use of small parcels of land for gardening and poultry-raising. The freedmen were required to furnish medical attention themselves, and they had to supply wearing apparel. The small compensation promised, however, was not always received. Money was scarce and the planters often failed to pay the Negroes what they owed them. Nevertheless, in the face of all these difficulties many Negroes worked faithfully under contract¹⁸ and the crops were reported as generally good where the planting had been adequate.¹⁹

The General Assembly, however, considered the question exclusively from the standpoint of the complaining employers. On January 15, 1866, that body passed a drastic measure providing for the punishment of vagrants. By the first section the act empowered and required such officers as overseers of the poor, special county police, and police of any corporation who should discover a vagrant within their jurisdiction to cause him to be brought before a justice of the peace for examination. If the suspect should appear to be a vagrant, he was to be hired out for a term of service not exceeding three months, for the best wages procurable. With certain exceptions, this compensation was to be applied to the

¹⁷ *Times*, November 9, 1865.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1865; *Republic*, June 17, 1865; *Alexandria Gazette*, July 11 and December 6 and 11, 1865; *Nation*, I, 173-175; *Freedmen's Bureau Report*, 1865 and 1866.

¹⁹ *Enquirer*, June 19, July 2 and Dec. 31, 1866; Feb. 14, 20, March 2, April 9, 1867; Aug. 17, 1868.

benefit of the vagrant or his family. If, during the period of service, the vagrant should abscond without legal cause, the employer was thereby entitled to his services free for an additional month. The employer was also authorized to shackle the "vagrant" with ball and chain. The employer, however, was not obligated to take back the returned "vagrant." In case of refusal the "culprit" might be used in the public service of the county or corporation, for the period of service to which the employer was entitled, confined by ball and chain. On the other hand, the "vagrant" might be hired out to another employer for maintenance, during this unexpired period of service, confined by ball and chain; or, if not otherwise disposed of, he might be imprisoned in the county jail and fed on bread and water.²⁰

In the second section, the act defined the term "vagrant." Five classes of persons were subject to the penalties imposed by the law. These embraced "all persons who shall unlawfully return into any county or corporation whence they have been legally removed"; "all persons who, not having wherewith to maintain themselves and their families, live idly and without employment, and refuse to work for the usual and common wages given to other laborers in the like work in the place where they then are"; "all persons who shall refuse to perform the work which shall be allotted to them by the overseers of the poor as aforesaid"; "all persons going from door to door, or placing themselves in the streets, highways or other roads, to beg alms, and all other persons wandering abroad and begging, unless disabled or incapable of labor"; and "all persons who shall come from any place without this commonwealth to any place within it, and shall be found loitering and residing therein, and shall follow no labor, trade, occupation or business, and have no visible means of subsistence, and can give no reasonable account of themselves or their business in such places."²¹ It was also provided that all costs and expenses incurred should be paid out of the hire of the vagrant, if sufficient; and if not sufficient, the deficiency was to be paid by the county or corporation.

²⁰ *Acts of the General Assembly, 1865-1866, 91-92.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

The law of vagrancy was applicable to both whites and blacks, but it was intended to invest planters with the complete control of Negro labor, at whatever price the former might combine to fix. This was conceded in the reported statement of the Richmond *Enquirer* that "with such laws, we greatly fear that most of the able-bodied freedmen will be driven from the State, to prevent being remanded to a servitude far less humane than that from which they were released, without any agency on their part by the collapse of the Confederacy."²² Regarding the act in practically the same light, General Terry pointed out that employers had met, in many counties, and formed unjust and wrongful combinations "for the purpose of depressing the wages of freedmen below the real value of their labor, far below prices formerly paid to masters for labor performed by their slaves." Since this statute compelled the freedmen to accept the wages established in such communities, it placed their labor under the control of these employers who would have the wages fixed by combination of the common and usual wages throughout the State. Thus the ultimate effect of the statute would be to reduce the freedmen to serfdom. General Terry, therefore, prohibited the application of the statute to Negroes.²³

In addition to the drastic vagrant law, the General Assembly passed a law regulating contracts for labor between white persons and Negroes. The measure provided that no such contract, engaging the service of the Negro for a period exceeding two months, should be binding upon the Negro, except when in writing, signed by the employer or his agent, and by the Negro, and duly acknowledged before a justice of the peace or other qualified public officer, or attested by two or more witnesses, in the county where the white person resided, or in which the labor was to be performed. It provided that the public officer or witnesses should read and explain the contract to the Negro before taking his acknowledgment of the same, and should state that this had been done in the certificate of the acknowledgment of the contract.²⁴

²² Quoted in the *Freedmen's Record* (March 1866), Vol. II, 45.

²³ Published in *Richmond Times*, January 26, 1866.

²⁴ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1865-1866, 83.

In the second section, the act provided punishment for enticing away from an employer a laborer bound to him by contract. Any person wilfully committing such an offence was made liable to the aggrieved employer for not less than ten dollars, nor more than twenty dollars for every such offence; and the amount might be recovered before any justice of the peace. The act provided no penalty against the laborer who should break a contract. Yet, when considered in connection with the vagrancy law, the consequences of such an act were severe. An employer was prohibited from engaging the laborer during the unexpired period of the contract; and, if the laborer remained unemployed, he was legally liable to arrest and forced to labor under the terms of the vagrancy law. This reflected the attitude of the employers toward the freedmen.

Too many former masters had the dangerous ideas reported by a traveler in Virginia in 1865. "The crops this year," said he, "have been small. Next year the new employer intends they shall be very much larger, and I venture to predict that his hopes will be fulfilled. For the causes of the trouble on this plantation are sufficiently obvious, and they may all be removed. The owner of it is, I should say, a humane man, and I could readily believe that he himself, whatever his overseers may be able to boast, had ordered but one of his negroes to be whipped. His people probably found him kind and indulgent in all his intercourse with them, and he is now conscious of none but the friendliest and best intentions towards them. But as a wealthy slaveholder and a veritable descendant of Pocahontas, he is proud, and will have nothing less than complete deference; he believes that the blacks were born for slavery, and is intolerant of anything resembling independence and self-reliance in them; moreover, he is an original secessionist, and thinks emancipation unjust. In short, he wishes still to be master, is willing to be a kind master, but will not be a just employer. Perhaps he is now too old to learn; but they, on the other hand, are not, and his endeavor to keep them tractable slaves has had no better success than to make them unpaid and discontented

freedmen. Having tried the new labor system, with the essential feature of it left out, he, of course, finds it a failure."²⁵

Notwithstanding such hostile attitude, there was some thought as to the social improvement of the Negroes. The same General Assembly enacted measures expressive of such an attitude toward the freedmen. One such measure recognized the abolition of slavery in the State. Incorporated in the joint resolutions approving the reconstruction policy of President Johnson were the words "that involuntary servitude, except for crime, is abolished, and ought not to be re-established; and that the negro race among us should be treated with justice, humanity, and good faith; and every means that the wisdom of the legislature can devise should be used to make them useful and intelligent members of society."²⁶

Other measures enacted granted to the freedmen certain rights and privileges accorded to other persons. One such was the law legalizing the marital relations of Negroes living according to the custom of slavery as husband and wife. The issue of such former connections was made legitimate.²⁷ Another required the master to teach the apprentice a specified art or trade, and "reading, writing and common arithmetic, including the rule of three."²⁸ Still another measure defined "colored persons" as those having one-fourth or more of Negro blood, and made the criminal laws applicable to white persons applicable also to Negroes. The same act repealed certain chapters, or sections of chapters of the Code of 1860 making distinctions in law between Negroes and others. The acts repealed related to free Negroes, slaves and slavery, offences by Negroes, patrols, proceedings against Negroes, and the like. There were repealed acts and all parts of acts imposing on Negroes the penalty of stripes where the same penalty was not imposed on whites.²⁹ On the other hand, more stringent penalties were imposed for the com-

²⁵ *The Nation*, I, 299.

²⁶ *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1865-1866, under Joint Resolutions.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

mission of certain crimes. Thus the death penalty might be imposed for rape or burglary, formerly punished by imprisonment. The same penalty might be imposed for horse-stealing; and the minimum penalty for grand larceny was increased from one year to five years.³⁰

A measure of prime importance was the act in relation to the testimony of Negroes.³¹ This act permitted Negroes to testify before the courts in all civil cases and criminal proceedings where their interests were involved, but it did not permit them to testify in cases in which only whites were concerned. After the act was approved, the jurisdiction of cases involving freedmen was transferred from the special courts to the civil tribunals.³² At the same time, agents of the Freedmen's Bureau were directed to be present at all criminal proceedings in their jurisdiction where freedmen were concerned. They were required to give counsel to Negro litigants in such prosecutions, to examine and report any instance of oppression or injustice against a Negro, or any discrimination against evidence offered by one.³³

While the General Assembly enacted this favorable legislation, it also promoted the domination of the State government by the reactionaries. This was accomplished by electing from that class new State officers to replace those who had been serving under Peirpont.³⁴ In the meantime, the conservatives in the other Southern States were returning to power. Southern legislatures passed hostile "black codes" minutely regulating and restricting the activities of the freedmen as a separate inferior class. Southern citizens perpetrated outrages on the freedmen upon the slightest provocation, and, in several instances, numbers of freedmen were killed in riots. These extreme measures caused Congress to doubt that the South could be trusted to deal with the Negroes independently, and, as a result, that body authorized an investigation of the conditions in the South.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 82, 88, 90. See also Code of 1860, 785, 788-789.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

³² *Ibid.*, 90.

³³ See order of the Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. *Times*, March 17, 1866.

³⁴ *Senate Journal*, 1865-1866, 99-107.

The inquiry into affairs in Virginia commenced on January 23, 1866. The sub-committee in charge heard forty-nine witnesses representing every shade of opinion in the State. These witnesses included such former secessionists as General Robert E. Lee and John B. Baldwin; such unconditional Union men as John F. Lewis and John Minor Botts; such federal officers as General A. H. Terry, General John W. Turner and Colonel Orlando Brown; and such representative Negroes as Daniel M. Norton and Thomas Bayne. Some submitted testimony decidedly favorable to the Virginians in reference to their loyalty to the Union and their just treatment of the Negroes. Others testified altogether to the contrary. The prevailing testimony tended to show that in heart Virginia was still arrayed against the Union; that troops were required to protect the rights of Union men and Negroes; and that the planters intended to exploit the labor of the blacks.³⁵

This testimony based mainly upon competent evidence, when considered in connection with conditions in other Southern States, impelled Congress to carry out independently of the President certain measures for the welfare of the Union and the freedmen. The first was the Civil Rights Bill which passed over the veto of the President and became law in April, 1866. This measure proposed to establish equality in the enjoyment of civil rights for all citizens of the country and to make citizens all persons born in the country and not subject to any foreign jurisdiction. It guaranteed all citizens the same rights in the States and territories of the United States to make and enforce contracts, to sue and be sued, to give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold and convey real and personal property, and to be fully and equally benefitted by all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property as were enjoyed by white citizens. This law was, therefore, in direct conflict with the sentiment of the people of Virginia, and with some of the statutes of the State.

The second measure, passed over the veto of the President in July, 1866, renewed and extended the powers of the Freed-

³⁵ *Reports of Committees, Thirty-Ninth Congress, First Session, Part II, Virginia.*

men's Bureau. It provided for the immediate, thorough organization of the agency in Virginia and other Southern States. The measure vested in the Bureau the power to build schoolhouses and asylums for the freedmen. It gave to the agency far-reaching jurisdiction over all civil and criminal cases where equality in civil rights and status, and in the application of penalties, was denied, or the denial thereof attempted on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude. The law empowered the Bureau to control practically the whole sphere of the Negroes' social relations with the whites and left to the State governments only a minimum control over the freedmen.

These measures had different effects on the two conflicting classes. The reactionaries were generally embittered towards the Negroes; the freedmen became more hopeful and assertive of their rights.^{35a} A manifestation of the antagonism came in connection with a celebration of the freedmen in Norfolk. On April 16, 1866, when they were celebrating the passage of the Civil Rights Bill, the procession was fired on as the line of march was passing the domicile of one Mrs. Whitehurst. There followed a general mêlée in which it was reported that two blacks and two whites were killed and several others seriously injured. A military force was required to disperse the mob. It is difficult to assign responsibility in the affair because of the conflicting reports of its origin.³⁶ Yet it greatly excited the white people of the State. The press had already been instrumental in causing the removal of Negro troops from the State. The same journals now made relentless war on the parading of armed Negroes in the principal cities of Virginia. They did not establish that such conflicts were a necessary outcome of the drilling of armed Negroes, nor did they show that Negroes were the aggressors in this, or any other conflict which had theretofore occurred. Yet the matter was adjusted to the satisfaction of the whites, when a military order prohibited public drills by any but the lawful militia of the State.³⁷

^{35a} *Enquirer*, July 25, August 2, 1866; November 2, 13, 19, 1867; and George Rose, *The Great Country*, 158.

³⁶ *Norfolk Day Book*, April 16 and 17, 1866.

³⁷ *Enquirer*, August 1, 1866.

The Virginia Unionists were distinctly pleased with the turn of events. Heartened by the passage of the Civil Rights Bill, they decided to form a State organization theretofore neglected. A convention of sixty unconditional Union men met at Alexandria on May 17, 1866. Such prominent men as John F. Lewis, W. Andrews, C. M. Gibbons, George E. Tucker, A. M. Crane, T. N. Robinson, W. R. Smith, Jonathan Jenkins, Wm. Brown, T. W. Robinson, Burnham Wardwell, J. H. Clements, John Pollock, S. Trenary, R. A. Gray, and W. J. Cowing were participants. The body elected John Minor Botts president. Botts had been a prominent Whig, and as such had represented Virginia in Congress. He had suffered imprisonment because he refused to support the Confederacy. Under his leadership, these men organized the Union Republican Party of Virginia and defined its policy toward the late secessionists and the freedmen. Resolutions adopted recommended the accountability of both legislative and executive branches of government of a State to the whole people of that State, endorsed a reconstruction policy providing against the recrudescence of the doctrine of secession, and declared that the late rebels, instead of accepting the situation in good faith, had held to their former opinions as a basis of future party action. The body approved, too, the establishment of a system of free public schools, and endorsed the impartial, qualified suffrage of both races, after some opposition from Botts and others had been registered against the enfranchisement of the Negroes.³⁸

Some time later events of national significance changed the attitude of the Virginia Unionists toward Negro suffrage. The first was the convention attempting to unite the so-called conservative Northern and Southern men in opposition to the developing policy of Congressional Reconstruction. The body met in Philadelphia on August 14, 1866.³⁹ Resolutions urging peace and cooperation were adopted, and the attempt was made to create sentiment in favor of conservative views. Virginia was represented by "old line Democrats."⁴⁰ In op-

³⁸ *Enquirer*, May 18, 19, 1866; *Norfolk Old Dominion*, May 18, 19, 1866.

³⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, August 15, 1866.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1866.

position to the policy of the so-called conservatives, a convention of Northern Republicans and Southern Unionists met in Philadelphia on September 2, 1866. The delegates, dividing into two bodies because of numbers, considered the question of Negro suffrage. Opinions differed as to the extent to which Negroes should be enfranchised. John Minor Botts stood for restricted suffrage. In this he was opposed by members of the Virginia delegation, including James W. Hunnicutt, who desired universal manhood suffrage and finally made this the policy of the Virginia reconstructionists.⁴¹

In the meantime, conditions in Virginia steadily grew worse. After the full jurisdiction in civil cases and criminal proceedings had been restored to the State Courts, the act permitting Negroes to testify in cases affecting the blacks was sometimes abused. Instances occurred in York County, in the Corporation Court of Norfolk, and elsewhere, necessitating the re-establishment of freedmen's courts in these counties in order to assure the administration of justice in cases involving the interests of freedmen.⁴²

In connection with the freedmen, a test case arose under the civil rights law permitting Negroes to testify in the same manner as white people in all cases. In the Circuit Court of Alexandria, an attempt was made to introduce the testimony of a Negro in a case in which white persons only were concerned. Judge H. W. Thomas, presiding, held such testimony inadmissible, notwithstanding the civil rights law, insisting that the State Court was governed by the laws of Virginia which did not admit the testimony of Negroes in such a case. The case was, therefore, removed to the United States District Court.⁴³

Injustice to Negroes in State Courts came in still another manner. The juries simply refused to convict in cases in which white men were charged with capital offences against Negroes. The most flagrant instance of this sort of injustice occurred in November, 1866. This was the case of Dr. James L. Watson, of Rockbridge, who killed a Negro under

⁴¹ *Enquirer*, September 6, 10, 1866.

⁴² *Report of Assistant Commissioner for Virginia, Freedmen's Bureau Reports*, 1867.

⁴³ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 26, 1866.

circumstances which appeared to justify a conviction of first degree murder. The Negro had driven into Watson's vehicle in such a way as to damage it considerably. On such slight provocation, and after the lapse of nearly a day, Watson sought the Negro where he was employed and assaulted him with a cane. When the freedman ran, refusing to halt, Watson shot and killed him.⁴⁴ In November, 1866, Watson was tried in Rockbridge County and acquitted. Commenting upon the verdict, the *Lynchburg News* said: "The testimony before the Court, we are informed, showed a number of circumstances fully justifying the Doctor in the commission of the act, and the result of the trial meets with the unanimous approval of the citizens of the county."⁴⁵ General Schofield, the military commander in Virginia, acting under the authority of the Freedmen's Bureau Act of July 16, 1866, ordered Watson arrested, to be tried before a military commission. Watson submitted to arrest. His counsel obtained from the Circuit Court of Richmond a writ of habeas corpus, which Schofield refused to obey. In the meantime the Attorney General of the United States, to whose attention the case had been brought, decided that the military commission had no jurisdiction. President Johnson, therefore, ordered the prisoner released. Nevertheless, this serious incident greatly strengthened the growing belief that Virginia could not be trusted to govern the freedmen.⁴⁶ Some feared open hostility.

Knowing the gravity of the situation late in 1866, Governor Peirpont urged the legislature to act with moderation and wisdom. He recommended modifications of the vagrancy law passed during the preceding session. He strongly recommended the ratification of the proposed Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution which the Congress of the

⁴⁴ *Richmond Times*, November 23, 1866. Taken from the *Lynchburg News* and *Lexington Gazette*.

⁴⁵ Quoted in the *Times*, November 28, 1866.

⁴⁶ *Richmond Times*, December 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 20, 21, 22, 1866; see report of General Terry to Commissioner Howard, published in *New York Tribune* of July 23, 1866, for accounts of refusal of Virginia juries to convict white men for killing Negroes. These were the cases of Washington Alsworth and his brother in Lunenburg County, and W. R. Eastham in Rappahannock County. *Richmond Times*, July 24, 1866.

United States had made a condition precedent to the admission of representatives from the lately seceded States to that body.⁴⁷ But the General Assembly was neither ready to disfranchise the secession leaders of the State, nor disposed to enfranchise the whole body of freedmen. The body all but unanimously rejected the measure.⁴⁸ This result reflected the public opinion of the State as attested by the press.⁴⁹

The General Assembly, however, quickly conceded the error of this action. The regular session ended on March 3, 1867, but in view of the reconstruction legislation pending in Congress, the General Assembly requested the Governor to call an extra session of this body. The Governor acted accordingly. On March 4, he sent to the legislature the military Reconstruction Act of Congress passed on March 2, 1867, to set forth the conditions for the rehabilitation of the erring States. The General Assembly debated a bill providing for the call of a constitutional convention in accordance with this measure. This was passed in the Senate by a decisive margin of 25 to 4⁵⁰ votes. In the House of Delegates, the bill was tabled on March 13, 1867,⁵¹ but control passed too quickly from its hands to take it up later. On April 20, 1867, however, the General Assembly repealed the act relating to the testimony of colored persons, and enacted a measure providing "that hereafter colored persons shall be competent to testify in this State as if they were white."⁵² But this was hardly death-bed repentance. The Reconstruction Act of March 2, 1867, transferred the affairs of the State to the Federal Government and Congress passed a supplementary Reconstruction Act on March 23, 1867. Virginia thereby became Military District Number One. The restoration of the State to the Union had then been made possible on the basis of universal manhood suffrage, without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude.

⁴⁷ *Virginia Senate Journal*, 3, 11, 28-34.

⁴⁸ *Senate Journal and Documents*, 1866-1867, 103; *House Journal and Documents*, 1866-1867, 108.

⁴⁹ See Virginia newspapers, Jan. 10, 1867.

⁵⁰ *Senate Journal*, 1866-1867, 345.

⁵¹ *House Journal*, 1866-1867, Extra Session, 39.

⁵² *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1866-1867, 860.

This was in reality a political and social revolution with one race arrayed against the other. During the next generation the State had to grapple with problems which a wiser course on the part of their chosen leaders might have avoided.

At this time the politicians from the North were coming into the State and together with the Union soldiers, office-holders, and agents of the Freedmen's Bureau already there, were beginning to organize the Negroes for cooperation with the party then in control of the Federal Government. To this number there should be added also such natives of the State as were really convinced that a new order of things was at hand and that the best way to solve the problems of the hour was to cooperate with the powers in control. The reactionary whites redoubled their efforts to counteract this movement and the bitter feeling became intensified from day to day.

Some of the participants in this movement deserve mention. Already on the scene there was James W. Hunnicutt, a native of South Carolina and then a citizen of Fredericksburg, inflaming the Negroes against the whites in such manner that he did the cause which he represented more harm than good. His efforts tended to consolidate against him all of the leading thinkers of the State regardless of their former political affiliations.⁵³ John C. Underwood, first a resident of the State in 1861, another of those directing the political activities of the freedmen, proceeded energetically but more cautiously and finally became the moving spirit of the convention which framed the constitution of 1868. John Minor Botts, a Virginia Whig, less inclined to go as far as Hunnicutt or Underwood, at first undertook to get control of the new party in the State, hoping to make the most out of an undesirable situation; but his faith in freedom was not firm enough to attract a large following of Negroes.⁵⁴

These efforts to organize the Negroes as Republicans became more systematized as the movement proceeded. The leaders established a number of newspapers like the *State Journal* and the *New Nation* which circulated extensively

⁵³ *Enquirer*, Dec. 5, 1866; Oct. 16, 21, April 27, Nov. 29, 1867.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Oct. 17, 1867.

among the freedmen and their white advisers. Furthermore, they held various meetings throughout the State, especially just before elections, giving the Negroes detailed instructions as to how they should proceed.⁵⁵ Negroes were told that they were in danger of being re-enslaved and their only hope lay in standing by the party which freed them. They were encouraged to believe that the Yankees would dispossess the native whites of their lands and give each freedman forty acres and a mule. The Negroes received these words with enthusiasm and followed the advice of their new leaders. In conforming to the Reconstruction measures of Congress these forces were instrumental in calling the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868 and elected many of their own sentiments to rehabilitate the State. But there still remained some doubt as to whether these leaders from without could maintain their ascendancy over the minds of the Negroes.

There was thought to be some danger for the Union in the enfranchisement of the freedmen. One phase of the native whites' effort to manage and control the Negroes was the attempt to influence their participation in the government.⁵⁶ The Southerner believed that this was possible and many Northerners had much apprehension as to the wisdom of giving the Negroes suffrage when their former masters had such an opportunity to control their votes. This, of course, was a matter of self-defense. The whites were anxious that the Negroes should do nothing prejudicial to the interests of the former master class. This was one of the reasons why certain aristocratic whites willingly addressed assemblies of Negroes when invited. To some extent it accounts also for frequent preaching in Negro churches and their participation in the education of the Negro.

It was very difficult to exert over the mind of the Negro sufficient influence to determine his political action, however, when the spokesmen of these very whites thus interested were contemptuously referring to the Negro citizen as a political misfit and a menace to good government. At first Virginia like most parts of the South recently engaged in

⁵⁵ *Enquirer*, Sept. 21, 1866; March 7, 12, April 27, 1867.

⁵⁶ *Nation*, I, 174.

rebellion offered the Negro a status differing little from that of the slaves. The *Dispatch*, which was less antagonistic to Negroes than some of the other papers of the State like the *Enquirer*, insisted, nevertheless, that no Negro should vote or hold office.⁵⁷ They were not to be permitted to spend their time as vagrants. Their social condition was to be improved to the extent of enforcing among them the regulations of marriage and morality long since obtaining among the whites, but by law and public opinion they were to be prohibited from any close social contact with the whites. The very thought of intermarriage was most revolting. They were to be granted such economic rights as owning property and engaging in trade, but they should not constitute a part of the body politic as voters and officeholders. It was in vain, then, that the native white press repeatedly urged the Negroes to cooperate with their former masters. These words fell on deaf ears, especially when they were addressed "in the language of conscious superiority."⁵⁸ By keeping before the native whites the color scare, however, the reactionaries won the election of the officers charged with carrying out the principles of the new constitution and gradually eliminated the Negro from the government.

The Freedmen's Bureau and the Union League were also conspicuous in the drama, protecting, educating, and preparing the freedmen for citizenship. The former was a benevolent and the latter a secret political organization. Carrying out a program opposed by the native whites, these agencies became the objects of bitter attacks and calumnies. The Ku Klux Klan, therefore, developed. Many writers falsely assert that the Freedmen's Bureau and the Union League effected the estrangement of the freedmen from their masters and caused the misfortunes resulting from reconstruction. These authors magnify especially the mistakes of the Union League to justify the outrages committed by the Ku Klux Klan. There is no evidence that either the Freedmen's Bureau or the Union League encouraged the Negroes to harm the native whites.

⁵⁷ This was repeated from time to time in the editorials of the *Dispatch*.

⁵⁸ *Enquirer*, Aug. 25, 1871.

CHAPTER II

THE NEGRO POPULATION

Our approach of this unusual upheaval should be through the study of the social order. Let us direct attention, then, to the Negro element in particular. The population of Virginia decreased in the decade from 1860 to 1870. The United States Bureau of the Census reported 1,596,318 inhabitants in 1860. The number had diminished to 1,225,163 in 1870. Both the white and black populations had sustained losses. The former had decreased from 1,047,299 to 712,089; the latter from 548,907 to 512,841. Several causes contributed to this result. In the first place, the establishment of West Virginia from certain counties of the State decidedly diminished the population accredited to Virginia in 1860. The separated territory contained 355,526 white persons and 21,162 Negroes at that time. A second cause was the Civil War during which large numbers of white and some Negro participants were killed. Furthermore, the black and white population diminished from an interstate migration in response mainly to economic causes. Finally, the white population decreased from the migration of young men to Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and other countries either in quest of fortune, or because of dissatisfaction with conditions obtaining in Virginia just after the Civil War.¹

The Virginia population of 1865 is not known. No State-wide census was made that year. In 1866, however, the Freedmen's Bureau, basing its statement upon the returns of a complete census for some districts and careful estimates for others, reported a Negro population of approximately 500,000, out of a total of nearly 1,200,000. Yet, the statistics of the distribution of the Negro population are far from conclusive. The aggregations of Negroes in such places as Alexandria,

¹ *United States Census Reports, Volume of Population and Social Statistics*, 1870, XI, XII; Jed. Hotchkiss, *Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary*, 175; *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*. See also *Enquirer*, April 8, Dec. 19, 1867; Feb. 12, April 2, 1869.

Fortress Monroe, Hampton, Craney Island, Norfolk, Yorktown, and Suffolk did not present a serious problem to the enumerator. But it was impossible to estimate with approximate accuracy the numbers moving between the plantations and the towns. During this period, moreover, the Negroes moved in both directions inasmuch as the military edicts brought about the return of many from the towns to the plantations.²

The United States Census returns of population for 1860 and 1870, in spite of the inaccuracies of the latter, show that a wide re-distribution of the Negro population had taken place. According to these returns that portion of Virginia remaining after the dismemberment contained 527,763 Negroes in 1860. These were distributed in six agricultural regions. In 1870, there lived in this territory 512,841 Negroes. During the decade this population had decreased in every region except the Blue Ridge where the gain was less than 1,000. In the densely settled Tidewater, Middle, and Piedmont regions there were 477,701 Negroes in 1860 and 465,465 in 1870. Yet the Negroes had concentrated in these regions. Certain counties of these sections had had a normal increase but probably would have reported a larger number of blacks if they had not suffered a loss in the migration of the freedmen to other parts. In these districts, moreover, the white population had increased from 447,165 to 451,753; but in some of the counties this population had decreased.³

The concentration of Negroes in certain counties of the populous regions resulted partly from the movement of plantation freedmen to the towns. The Negro population of fourteen towns and cities of these regions increased from 40,281 in 1860 to 62,069 in 1870. At the same time, this population in five "Valley" towns increased from 3,159 to 4,776. In these nineteen municipalities, the aggregate increase of the Negro population was 23,405. During this period, the same communities registered an insignificant decrease in the white

² *Report of Freedmen's Bureau, 1865-1870; Report of the Committee of Representatives of the Negro York Yearly Meeting of Friends, upon the Condition and Wants of the Colored Refugees, 1862, 1; Richmond Times, June 14, 1865.*

³ *United States Census Reports, 1870, Volume of Population and Social Statistics, Table II, 69-70; Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary, 175.*

population. As a result, the movement all but equalized the white and Negro populations of Richmond, Norfolk and Lynchburg; and it brought about a numerical ascendancy of the Negro population of Petersburg.⁴

The concentration of Negroes in these cities continued. In Petersburg and Lynchburg, the Negroes outnumbered the whites in 1880. In this year the Census reported an increase over the population of 1870. Yet the white population had decreased in such counties as Amelia and Charles City; and the Negro in Powhatan, Lee and Buchanan. In the latter two counties, the Negro population had been small in the past. On the other hand, the total population, which had advanced from 1,225,163 in 1870 to 1,512,565 in 1880, had not kept pace with that of more prosperous states. But the two main classes had increased since 1870. The white population was 880,858; the Negro, 631,616.⁵

A more detailed study of the population may be instructive. Statistics are submitted for selected areas. They show the decrease of Negro population in certain agricultural regions as reported in 1870; the concentration of the Negro population in specified counties of these regions; and the accumulation of the freedmen in certain urban communities. The statistics for 1880 show the general growth of the population in selected areas during the decade beginning in 1870.

TABLE I: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN AGRICULTURAL REGIONS, 1860 AND 1870⁶

Regions	Whites		Negroes	
	1860	1870	1860	1870
Tidewater.....	167,129	168,650	177,570	177,475
Middle.....	164,800	161,996	206,235	201,905
Piedmont.....	115,236	121,107	93,896	86,085
Blue Ridge.....	23,117	26,479	1,383	2,079
Valley.....	153,517	159,927	40,772	38,027
Appalachian.....	67,974	73,922	7,817	7,270

⁴ *Statistics of Population, 1870, Table III, 278-283; Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary, 191-192.* See also the *Richmond Dispatch*, July 20, 1876.

⁵ *United States Census Reports (1880), I, Table 1a, 3; Table V, 412-413; Table VI, 425.*

⁶ *Virginia: A Geographical and Political Summary, 175.*

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TABLE II: POPULATION OF SELECTED COUNTIES IN 1860, 1870 AND 1880 ⁷

	Whites			Negroes		
	1860	1870	1880	1860	1870	1880
Albemarle.....	12,103	12,550	15,959	14,522	14,994	16,659
Campbell.....	13,588	14,041	17,297	12,609	14,343	18,953
Dinwiddie.....	13,678	13,017	14,437	16,520	17,664	18,428
Halifax.....	11,060	11,562	13,293	15,460	16,266	20,295
Henrico.....	37,966	35,148	44,822	23,631	31,031	37,878
Mecklenburg.....	6,778	7,162	8,222	13,318	14,156	16,388
Norfolk.....	24,357	24,380	29,197	11,807	22,320	29,453
Pittsylvania.....	17,105	15,259	25,389	14,999	16,084	27,200

TABLE III: POPULATION OF CITIES AND TOWNS IN 1860, 1870, 1880, WHICH HAD 4,000 INHABITANTS IN 1880 ⁸

	White			Negro		
	1860	1870	1880	1860	1870	1880
Alexandria.....	9,851	8,269	8,279	2,801	5,300	5,380
Danville.....	1,398	3,129	2,065	4,397
Fredericksburg.....	3,309	2,715	3,151	1,713	1,331	1,859
Lynchburg.....	3,802	3,472	7,485	3,051	3,353	8,474
Manchester.....	1,828	1,517	3,757	965	1,082	1,972
Norfolk.....	10,290	10,462	11,898	4,330	8,766	10,068
Petersburg.....	9,342	8,744	9,950	8,924	10,185	11,701
Portsmouth.....	8,011	6,960	7,554	1,477	3,629	3,829
Richmond.....	23,632	27,928	35,765	14,275	23,110	27,832
Staunton.....	2,865	3,585	4,436	1,010	1,535	2,225
Winchester.....	3,004	3,100	3,441	1,388	1,377	1,517

On the whole, the Virginia Negroes were exceptionally progressive. "Unlike the negro population with which I have been acquainted," said an observer in 1865, "these men, as well as others of their race whom I have met in Virginia, seem to look for an improvement in their condition more to their own exertions and to local action, and less to the general Government and the people of the North. They are decidedly more intelligent than the negroes of Southern Georgia and South Carolina, and evince their superiority by their language, dress, and alertness of demeanor." ⁹

⁷ *United States Census Reports*, I, 1880, Table V, 412-413.

⁸ *United States Census Reports, Statistics and Population*, 1870, Table III, 278-283. I, 1880, Table VI, 425. The Negro population of Portsmouth in 1860 included 8 Indians.

⁹ *The Nation*, I, 137.

The living conditions of the Negro population, however, were not standardized. They varied according to the economic and social status of individuals. When the war ended, numbers of Negroes living in rural sections acquired farms which, generally low in price, were of inferior or indifferent lands. On these, the freedmen constructed log cabins or cottages in which they lived in some degree of comfort. Other Negroes lived as tenants upon the estates of planters, and generally inhabited log huts, with gardens attached. These tenants had the right to cut fire wood, and the use of a pasture for cows or pigs. Some freedmen settled on abandoned plantations in parts of southeastern Virginia where they constructed rude huts in which they dwelt until forcibly ejected from the property.¹⁰ Still others working as farm laborers generally lodged in the former slave cabins. Some of these cabins, worse than stables and destitute of windows, had floors of mud or sand. On the contrary, house servants in rural sections were commonly quartered in an inferior house on the premises of the employer; but, in the cities, domestics were lodged, as a rule, in some such secluded apartment as the attic or basement of the employer's home. Urban Negroes not employed in domestic service commonly lived in a segregated section of cities in poor, squalid-looking structures.

This picture from a correspondent of *The Nation* in 1865 better presents the situation as to housing: "Where I have been," said he, "houses of the better sort are few, or, at least, few are visible from the road as one rides along. Some, however, I saw, standing among trees, and well built of wood or of brick—roomy and pleasant mansions, that looked as if they might be the residences of people at once farmers and educated gentlemen, and the abodes of a hospitality of which we may read in Virginian histories. Not far from such houses were usually the cabins of the negro laborers, huts, framed and boarded in some instances, in some instances built of unhewn logs. Similar to these are the greater number of the detached houses occupied by the white population of the country through which I have been travelling. Very simple

¹⁰ *Whig*, Jan. 2, July 9, 1869; *Dispatch*, Sept. 9, 1871.

architectural rules govern the construction of these dwellings, and a description of one is a description of all. They are about fourteen feet in length and from ten to twelve feet in width. The height from the ridge-pole to the ground does not exceed fourteen feet. The chimney, which is always at one of the gable ends of the building, and on the outside of it, sometimes just peers above the roof and sometimes stops short a yard or so below it, and vents its smoke against the wall. The dwelling has two windows, unglazed but furnished with a shutter, which is closed when the rain comes in or when the wind is in such a quarter that there is difficulty in persuading the smoke to go up the chimney if there is any interference with the draft from the door. The floor may be of earth trodden hard, or, as is more common, of boards; and there are also boards laid upon the cross beams which, terminating just beneath the eaves, separate the lower room from the space immediately under the rafters. These boards form the floor of a loft, which contains the beds of the children, and which also serves as the granary and general store-room of the family. Most likely the apartment on the ground floor is unequally divided by a rough partition wall of home-made clap-boards, and thus another private sleeping place is obtained; opposite the bedroom-door is the fireplace, six feet high and four feet wide, an oblong hole of these dimensions having been cut in the logs that form the end wall. Outside the house two upright posts, one opposite each side of the above-mentioned aperture, and about four feet distant from it, are planted in the ground. Then 'puncheons,' pieces of wood roughly resembling laths, and used for the same purpose, are so arranged as to form the three sides of the fire-place, shorter puncheons, laid as children lay sticks in making cob-houses, are piled one on another till the frame-work of the chimney, growing narrower as it ascends, is properly made. Over all is spread a thick coat of mud, which commonly is well enough prepared, or often enough renewed, to protect the sides and back of the fire-place from the action of the fire, but higher up the bare puncheons are charred and in places burnt into holes where the sparks have at some time kindled the

dry wood. Within and without, the house, unwhitened by paint or whitewash, bears traces of continual smoke and the blackening power of time and weather. The furniture is of course scanty and of the poorest kind. The objects that most strike the attention on entering are the large fire-place with its cooking utensils, and the range of pipkins and tubs, with the drinking gourds, containing water; for few of these houses are provided with a well, and the water is brought from the nearest spring at set times of the day, the vessels being usually carried on the heads of the children. A fence of palings, or of pickets interwoven with brushwood, encloses a small patch of garden ground, planted with cabbages, string-beans and tomatoes. Just at the door-step, where the soil is likely to be richest, a dozen of tobacco plants, raised for home consumption, grow strong and tall, and nearby is a bush or two of red peppers, much used by these people in medicine and in cookery. Probably a small fowl-hutch stands at the corner of the garden, two or three pigs lie at length by the road-side, and there is never wanting a noisy cur to bark at the passer-by. Sometimes it is a group of white children, sometimes of little negroes, that gaze at me from the doorway. Always there is corn growing beside such cabins, and beside one I saw the only cotton that I have yet observed in Virginia. There was, perhaps, half or three-eighths of an acre of it, and the plants were in full blossom. The field seemed clear of grass and weeds, but the cotton was not two feet high, and must, I should think, have been unmanured. The people who inhabit these houses must be the poorest of those who draw rations from the Government stores, and so far as my observation has extended, the military order which remands them to their own resources for a livelihood is perfectly justifiable, as relieving the Government of an unnecessary burden, and discouraging indolence.”¹¹

This housing condition, however, must be understood as obtaining among the large majority of Negroes as it did among the poor whites. Exception should be made here for a thrifty minority. There were some Negroes whose circumstances were decidedly better than those mentioned above. These

¹¹ *The Nation*, I, 239.

were largely free persons of color who were maintaining themselves independently in various occupations. Other such Negroes were serving the aristocratic whites in different capacities. Obtaining a fair stipend for such labor, these more fortunate Negroes had so improved their opportunities as to live in as comfortable homes as those of the whites of the middle class. Visiting Richmond in 1866, Henry Highland Garnett reported on the conditions of the Negroes, saying: "The laboring class live quite comfortably—and many of the better class live in no inconsiderable degree of refinement."¹² Observers found other Negroes of this class like Henry Pierman¹³ in practically all of the urban communities of the State and some of them in rural sections.¹⁴

The food of the Negroes was generally of the coarsest sort. As a rule, farm laborers were each given weekly rations of three pounds of bacon and a peck and a half of Indian corn meal; some few were allowed vegetables in addition to these as stated above. Often laborers in the cities were restricted to the use of coarser food than they had eaten as slaves. But this was not the rule with domestic servants who generally had food of the same quality consumed by their white employers. Tenants with gardens raised fresh vegetables for their families, kept pigs in order to have their own pork, and drank the fresh milk of their own cows. Thrifty Negroes bought flour out of which they made wheat bread; but most of them ate corn bread cooked with nothing but salt, soda, and water. As the economic status of the freedmen improved, however, they obtained a better quality of food.¹⁵ Because of their exceptional ability as cooks, furthermore, they were able to make relatively coarse food wholesome.¹⁶ Remarking on this capacity, an observer wrote that "a Negro man or

¹² *Presbyterian Monthly*, I (1866), 7.

¹³ Dixon, *New America*, II, 343-346.

¹⁴ Robertson and Robertson, *Our American Tour*, 117; Thomas, *My American Tour*, 201-202; Dixon, *New America*, II, 346; Sir George Campbell, *White and Black*, 277; Trowbridge, *The South*, 232-233.

¹⁵ Almost all Virginians ate such bread at times; but the Negro was reduced to this as a necessity.

¹⁶ *Living Age*, 161 (1884), 369; McCrae, *Americans at Home*, II, 50.

woman is born a good cook, and it is safe to say that many a white family even in respectable circumstances does not fare so well or, at any rate, seldom fares better than a colored (woman) family with a much smaller income.”¹⁷

The dress of these people was almost anything they could make it. With regard to their clothes, George Rose wrote in 1868 that “squalor and rags are their almost universal condition.”¹⁸ Berry, writing in 1880, said: “Now, there are two distinct orders of negro. The first . . . suggests a curious relic of the coal period, his native ebony shining through his rags, and surmounted by a venerable heirloom, which generations ago was a hat. The negro of the second class, on the other hand, has realized the importance of being ‘a man and a brudder,’ and marks his elevation by a swallow-tailed coat, a tasseled cane, and a scarf something between a rainbow and a flash of lightning. The necktie of the negro dandy is the most appalling piece of hosiery extant.”¹⁹ Yet other Negroes dressed differently, for in 1866 the Richmond *Enquirer* mentioned “well dressed negro men, presenting a neat and genteel appearance.”²⁰ And, in the report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1871, W. H. Ruffner said: “We everywhere see the same fondness for dress that characterized the better class of negroes in the West Indies after their emancipation in 1833; and the number of comfortably and even handsomely dressed colored people to be seen on a Sabbath day almost anywhere in Virginia, certainly furnishes evidence of thrift as well as of an aspiring taste.”²¹

Despite these evidences of social adjustment, the chief need of the majority of Negroes during the first years of freedom was to learn how to live. The upheaval of the Civil War brought in its wake destitution and disease. In the course of the struggle large numbers of Negro refugees accumulated at various points in Southeastern Virginia, and after the rebellion hundreds and thousands of freedmen flocked to

¹⁷ *Living Age*, Vol. 129, p. 107.

¹⁸ George Rose, *The Great Country*, 150.

¹⁹ Berry, *On the Other Side*, 90–91.

²⁰ *Enquirer*, June 8, 1866.

²¹ *Reports (1871), Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 117–118.

the cities while others went to agricultural districts where they were not needed. In most of these places the freedmen suffered for various reasons. There was, then, an oversupply of misadjusted labor not only in the towns and cities but also in certain farming communities. The poverty of some native whites and the indifference of others, moreover, contributed to the misfortune of the freedmen. In addition, the crops of 1865 were short mainly because of the unexpected termination of the war and the employment of many laborers in the military service. In the part of the State invaded, therefore, multitudes of Negroes and poor whites became destitute. But for the ministrations of Northern philanthropists, missionaries, and the Federal agencies then lately established in the State, and the contribution of mites by some of the better circumstanced, the poor of both races would have suffered even more than reports indicate that they did.²²

"So great and wide-spread is the destitution," said a reporter of *The Nation* writing from Richmond in July 1865, "that the military authorities have divided the city into districts, and soldiers detailed for the purpose go about from house to house, finding out whoever may be in need of aid, and giving them orders on the commissariat for stores. Besides the provisions thus distributed by the Government, the American Union Commission is engaged in ministering to the necessities of the people. One of the very few national flags to be seen in Richmond waves over the tent of its agency in the Capitol Square. There, since a week after the evacuation, tickets have every day been issued which secured to their holders a dinner of soup from the Commission's soup-house, or flour—of which several hundred barrels have been distributed—or meal and rice. Sometimes as many as fifteen hundred soup tickets have been given away in a day. The charities of the Government are, of course, upon a much more extended scale. In addition to its labors in relieving these more immediate wants, the Commission has furnished garden

²² U. S. Bureau of Freedmen Reports, 1865-1870; *Freedmen's Record*, 1865-1872; *American Missionary*, 1866 and 1867; *National Freedmen*, 1865-1869; *Annual Reports of the American Missionary Society*; *Richmond Enquirer*, Sept. 19, Oct. 13, 1866; Oct. 30, 1867; April 11, 1868; Jan. 24, 1872; Aug. 6, 1877.

seeds, and farming utensils of various kinds, to such cultivators of land as could bring satisfactory evidence of honesty and poverty. Certificates of loyalty are not required. No public announcement of this latter distribution was made, and the persons benefited since the first of this month, at which time it commenced, are not more than twenty in number, and are, for the most part, residents of Henrico County. From the account books of the Commission I am allowed to copy two or three returns, which are of interest as showing the unfortunate condition in which the ravages of war have placed very many farmers in the tide-water section of Virginia:

"Mrs. N. N. owns a hundred and twenty acres of land, of which there are thirty under cultivation; she has one horse and a small cart, but no farming implements, nor money to get them; her house is occupied by Federal Troops.

"G. M. has a wife and nine children; owns and cultivates six acres of land; has now a borrowed horse and plough, and no farming implements of his own.

"W. C. owns a hundred acres, and cultivates forty-five; borrows a horse; all the implements on his place destroyed by General Butler's army; and he has nothing left but his farm.

"Mrs. M. C. owns a hundred and fifty acres of land, has twenty-five acres under cultivation, hires a horse and cart from negroes; has no implements left that can be used; has not a dollar."²³

Inasmuch as such was the situation of the whites, that of many Negroes would beggar description. When disease came to add to the miseries entailed by poverty, they died in large numbers. When the cholera appeared so many Negroes were swept away that a few of the less intelligent thought the whites were poisoning them.^{23a} Referring in a somewhat exaggerating way to their plight on November 22, 1867, the editor of the *Enquirer* joined thus with many others in expressing the opinion that the Negroes were doomed to extinction: "At no period during the existence of slavery in Virginia was the physical and moral condition of the great mass of the negro population worse than it is at present.

²³ *Nation*, I, 136-137.

^{23a} *Enquirer*, Sept. 13, 1866. See also the *Enquirer*, Oct. 13, 1866; Oct. 30, 1867; and April 11, 1868.

In the third year of their freedom the indications are unmistakable that they are rapidly descending to the miserable condition in which they led a living death in the principal Atlantic cities. The causes to which Dickens and a host of other writers, who have visited them in their miserable dens in New York and Boston, ascribe their wretched state, are producing the same results here. The most eminent Southern physicians assure us that the post mortem examinations reveal the facts that consumption and scrofula, those scourges of the Northern negro, have since his liberation marked the freedman for their victim. Insufficient clothing and unwholesome food, unhealthy habitations, and the vices of our cities, towns and villages, explain the almost universal presence of diseases to which the negro was a stranger when he was tenderly cared for by a kind master.”²⁴

Referring to the ravages of pneumonia and typhoid fever, a writer said in the *Dispatch* as late as February 8, 1876: “These diseases have been especially fatal among the colored people. Several in the prime of life have died and others are very ill. Now it is that the care and attention of the old masters and mistresses are missed. The colored people when sick have no one to care for them, and they surely cannot care for themselves. The doctor may exhaust his skill, but what does this avail when met by dark hovels keeping out neither wind nor rain—no bedding, nothing to eat, the anxiety of a starving family, prescriptions not carried out, and a total ignorance of the simplest duties of a good nurse? There are cases of suffering in this county well calculated to bleed the driest heart.”²⁵

In this unhappy situation of unsanitary quarters, inadequate clothing, poor shelter and lack of food, the mortality naturally increased. The marked difference in mortality between the whites and Negroes, however, was largely due to the great number of deaths among infants in the Negro population. Mothers bearing children lacked medical attention. According to the United States Census for 1880, the

²⁴ *Enquirer*, Nov. 22, 1867. See also *Enquirer*, Oct. 13, 1866, and Oct. 30, 1867.

²⁵ *Dispatch*, Feb. 8, 1876.

Virginia death rate for the year ending May 31, 1880, was 16.32 a thousand. Among the white males, the rate was 14.02; and among the females, 14.01 a thousand. Among Negro males, the rate was 19.73 and among the females, 19.34. The distribution of mortality between the whites and Negroes is shown in the subjoined statistics.²⁶

MORTALITY OF THE RACES COMPARED

	All Deaths		Deaths of Children under Five Years	
	1870	1880	1870	1880
White Males.....	3,839	6,121	1,510	2,465
Negro Males.....	3,712	6,094	1,714	3,021
White Females.....	3,693	6,224	1,293	2,144
Negro Females.....	3,938	6,241	1,654	2,691
Totals.....	15,182	24,680	6,171	10,321

While the mortality rate of Negroes continued to exceed that of the whites, destitution among the freedmen rapidly decreased prior to 1870. Official statistics tend to show temporary dependency more prevalent among the whites than Negroes, when we take into consideration the distribution of rations and fuel to the poor of the State.²⁷ Abstracts

²⁶ The total deaths of 1870 include one Indian. See *United States Census Reports*; Volume of *Vital Statistics*, 1870, Table IX, 422-423; *Statistics of Mortality*, I (1880), 7, Table IV, 28. See, also, *Enquirer*, September 20 and 21, 1866, the article of Dr. Hunter McGuire quoted from the *Richmond Medical Journal* (1867) in the *Enquirer* of October 30, 1867; and Reid, *After the War*, 326.

²⁷ The Negro, it was thought, might soon pass away as the Indian. "The negro," said a Virginian in 1865, "I sincerely hope may disappoint my expectations. But if he does not, he is doomed to undergo extinction. Less than a hundred years of freedom will see the race practically exterminated. The negro will not work more than enough to supply his bare necessities. There isn't a county of Virginia where we haven't had some hundreds of free negroes, and they have been always perfectly worthless and lived in wretchedness. The negro stands as much in need of a master to guide him as a child does. When I look at my servants, I feel weighing upon me all the responsibilities of a parent. In the course of my life I have known many men who for that reason alone would never become the owner of a slave. I have brought up my children to feel so, and accustomed them to the thought of dispensing with slave labor. Those of them who are old enough share my views on the subject. But the negro will always need the care of some one superior to him, and unless in one form or another it is

of the reports of County Superintendents of the Poor show that 1,287 white persons and 1,077 Negroes were furnished rations and fuel in 1874. In the next year 1,250 whites and 1,081 Negroes were given these necessities. In 1879, the number of urban whites thus provided for was 2,967; the number of Negroes, 2,521.²⁸

In Richmond, furthermore, essentially similar conditions obtained. During the three years from 1873 to 1875, inclusive, white persons temporarily dependent received more extensive aid from official sources than the Negroes of similar condition. In 1873, the city issued to white persons 14,141 rations; to Negroes, 11,754. In the next year, the whites received 23,332 rations; the Negroes, 25,879. At the same time, fuel was given to 525 white, and to 420 Negro families. In 1875, the whites received 19,330 rations; the Negroes, 16,670. Fuel was issued to 629 white and 487 Negro families.²⁹ On the contrary, there was generally an excess of Negro over white inmates at the Richmond Almshouse. In some years, the number of whites exceeded the Negroes admitted; but the number of Negroes exceeded the whites remaining at the end of the given year. Besides, the number of deaths among the Negroes annually exceeded that among the white inmates of the institution. It would seem, therefore, that permanent dependency was slightly greater among the Richmond Negroes than among the whites.³⁰

Negroes, however, endeavored as soon as possible to relieve the distress among them. Negro churches and schools raised money to assist the poverty-stricken and the diseased.³¹

extended to him, the race will first become pauper and then disappear. Nothing but the most careful legislation will prevent it. Now take an example: of my negroes, nearly half were not on the working lists; but I had to support them all. What will the negro do when he is called upon to support not only himself (he isn't inclined to do that, and I don't believe he will do it), but also to get food, and clothes, and physic for the infants and disabled people belonging to him? Why, I doubt if my farm ever returned to me one per cent interest on the capital invested in it. He cannot do it. He couldn't do it if all the Southern States were confiscated and given him to do it with." *The Nation*, I, 110.

²⁸ *Annual Reports* (1875, 1876, 1877, 1880), Abstracts of *Reports of County Superintendents of the Poor*; *Enquirer*, January 1, 1875.

²⁹ *Richmond Dispatch*, January 1, 1874, Jan. 1, 1875, Jan. 1, 1876.

³⁰ See the first issues of the *Dispatch* and *Enquirer* for the years from 1870-1880.

³¹ *Enquirer*, July 26, 1866; Jan. 17, 1867; *Dispatch*, May 3, 1875; Jan. 8, 1876.

Saunders said in 1879: "There is a good deal of philanthropic effort amongst the negroes, supported by themselves."³² The suffering of the unfortunates from cholera and yellow fever easily touched the hearts of the majority of Negroes and as far as they could they helped the poor regardless of race.³³ Most poor whites, however, preferred starving to receiving assistance from the Negroes. The following item, AFRICAN ASSUMPTION, appearing in the *Enquirer*, February 29, 1868, shows this attitude. "A bit of arrogance and presumption on the part of a negress residing near the city alms-house," said the reporter, "has recently come to our notice, which, in a somewhat protracted experience, we have never seen surpassed. A lady of the highest respectability, but in very straitened circumstances, was anxious to procure a place for her daughter, (now just budding into womanhood,) with some respectable family. She desired her to be taught sewing and such household duties as would fit her for some sphere of usefulness in the future. This information reaching the ears of the insolent and presumptuous negress she waited upon the mother of the young lady, and proffered a place in her family, promising to feed and clothe her well, but not luxuriously or extravagantly. The indignation of the mother was such that she could not restrain her feelings, and without making any reply, seized a poker and gave the negress a blow, which caused her to beat a hasty retreat."³⁴

In misdemeanor Negroes figured both as observers and as participants. During the days of slavery they could not frequent the county court house or the city tribunals to witness the presentation of persons charged with crimes, the trials of which attracted the "sovereigns" from afar. Such a thing was the prerogative of the master class. As soon as the Negroes became free, however, they crowded these "palaces of justice." They were not wanted there, for their very presence marred the enjoyment of the whites once accustomed to repair regularly to these temples not only as spectators but to trade horses and Negroes and to discuss politics.

³² Saunders, *Through the Light Continent*, 77.

³³ *Dispatch*, Jan. 28, 1875.

³⁴ *Enquirer*, Feb. 29, 1868.

The press frequently expressed this feeling, as did the reporter on the *Enquirer* staff in referring thus to the proceedings of a court in Richmond: "Dark and lowering were the skies without," said he, "black and sullen were the clouds within on yesterday. Africa was on the rampage, the dock was thronged with forlorn, degraded and sulky eboshins."³⁵ A Negro brought up for trial was generally referred to in most ludicrous fashion as a "negro city buck," a "bullet-headed and brazen-faced lady of color," or a "kinky-headed culprit."³⁶

Enlarging upon this, the press would show its bias by more detailed accounts. "Cynthia Hamilton, a moon in eclipse," according to a court reporter, "rose early, but was so strongly in eclipse that she threw but little light on the offence with which she was charged."³⁷ "Eliza Ann Robertson, a darkey with fashionable tastes, bagged a silk dress valued at \$9 to match a new tilter which she had just purchased. Elizabeth Lindsey, the owner, not relishing the idea of Eliza's acting as a walking fashion plate in borrowed plumage, complained to the police, who consigned the stylish lady to the calaboose."³⁸ "Patsy Goode, a decrepid old negress, was arraigned for threatening to cut Henry Gwathney, a strapping buck darkey, who made his appearance a la Grand Turk with his harem of four young wives (for Henry is a second Brigham Young) who hurled their evidence very scornfully and spitefully at their ancient rival, for Patsy is Hal's first spouse."³⁹ "Jim Johnson, a flat-nosed, bullet-headed, asp-eyed little darkey, was proved guilty of stealing a sixteen pound weight from the butcher's stall of Wm. K. Sledd."⁴⁰ "Amanda Jefferson, 'lady of color,' was caged for stealing three pounds of butter from John (not Jim) Crow." "David Jackson and Charles Haskins, wards of the Bureau, were locked up, charged with stealing bacon from Mrs. Mary Bush."⁴¹ "Joe Cole, negro, no relation of the old monarch who is reported to have been

³⁵ *Enquirer*, Sept. 7, 1866.

³⁶ See almost any issue of the daily papers for 1866. See especially the *Enquirer*, July 4, 1866.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1866.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1866.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1866.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1866.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 31, 1866.

'a jolly old soul,' was arrested for threatening to assault and batter Jinny Cole, negress." ⁴² "Samuel Johnson, negro, brought up the rear, charged with being in possession, not of a dictionary, but of a dozen pieces of stolen salt beef." ⁴³

The records, however, do not show any crime wave. Among the Negroes there was an increase in the number of offenses committed; but most of these charges for which they were brought before the court would have been otherwise adjusted in slavery. The white man had lost control of the Negro, and the only legal way to have him punished was to appeal to the law. This method the former too often carried to an excess. As the officers of the State were at first the unreconstructed natives seeking in many cases to wreak vengeance upon the enemies of the old regime, the Negroes were often charged with petty offenses which showed no criminal intent. Some of them, as the records of the court will show, were charged with offenses which could not be proved. Not a few of these offenses, moreover, were the results of brawls between the Negroes and the poor whites, whom the former tried to treat with contempt. When congregated in centers of idleness and vice, too, numerous fracas occurred among the Negroes themselves. Many things which fear restrained them from doing when in slavery proved to be easy temptations in freedom. It requires time to develop self-restraint. Much trouble arose, also, from the failure of the Negro to understand family relations. Some of them unmercifully whipped their wives and children, feeling that the male parent sustained to these the same relation as that of the master to the slaves. Slavery taught that brutality is essential to authority. When such punishment went too far it usually ended in the courts.⁴⁴

The most flagrant of the crimes charged to Negroes was that of infanticide. Some few alarmists, hearing that such was frequent, thought that this, together with poverty and disease, would soon work the extermination of the Negro race. Negroes formerly encouraged to be prolific in a slave-breeding

⁴² *Enquirer*, Feb. 11, 1867.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1867.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, 7, 9, 13, 1867; May 19, June 24, 1869.

Virginia and untaught in the principles of morality, could not easily prevent themselves from going in the way they formerly had been permitted. The industry of producing slaves for sale flourished at the expense of the morality of Negroes. Informed, after the war, that such conduct was immoral and branded as a disgrace when thus overtaken in the shame of bearing illegitimate children, some debased mothers resorted to infanticide.⁴⁵ It is very strange, however, that there was so much comment on this crime among the Negroes when the press notices for the first year or two after the War show that it was on the increase also among the whites.⁴⁶ As the whites had for years enjoyed advantages which Negroes had been denied, it was a most natural thing for the latter to show less restraint.

In most cases, however, these Negroes were not guilty of serious infractions of the law. What they did was prompted largely by self-preservation, the first law of nature. Some had been turned loose upon the public by the breaking up of the homes of their masters and some had left their former abodes "to exercise their freedom." Others had been set adrift from the plantations after they had produced the crops for which they were not paid and which they were not permitted to enjoy during the following winter. Under such circumstances much pilfering followed during the first two or three years.⁴⁷ These freedmen had to eat and had to have something to wear.

The Negroes were not the sole malefactors increasing the number of crimes. The upheaval through which the country was passing led to an increase in crime among the whites. Virginia was no exception in this case. While the Negroes were fighting starvation and exposure by stealing food and clothing, the whites had organized bands for crimes on a larger scale. Fewer crimes, to be sure, were reported among

⁴⁵ *Enquirer*, July 12, 1866; Sept. 7, 10, 1867; March 18, April 10, 22, May 25, June 11, July 7, 27, 1868; April 24, 26, 1869. *Dispatch*, June 3, Aug. 31, 1870.

⁴⁶ *Enquirer*, Jan. 14, March 25, May 21, June 13, July 23, Aug. 15, Sept. 10, 1867; Nov. 4, 1870.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, June 13, 26, August 21, September 8, 13, October 2, 5, 1866; January 3, February 14, 19, 20, March 2, October 8, 1867; January 10, 29, February 24, July 1, July 24, December 7, 1868; March 18, 1869; Feb. 19, 1876.

the whites, but they were of the more flagrant sort like stealing horses, counterfeiting money, robbing banks and even murdering those who stood in their way.⁴⁸ Negroes on a smaller scale, of course, committed some of the graver offenses of theft, too, but they could not get very far in the pursuit without the cooperation of whites. This they often had. Negroes who stole more than they could actually consume themselves often did so with the understanding that they could sell the excess to some white man in collusion with them. The press of the State reported frequent cases of the sort brought before the courts. There was in Buckingham County a white man who, according to Dr. C. G. Woodson, was commonly referred to as having made his living by disposing of articles stolen by Negroes. Numbers of such crimes of Negroes may be traced to one white man. It was in vain that the purchaser pleaded ignorance as to the source of the articles bought. The presence of the goods themselves in the hands of the Negroes was evidence to the effect that they were stolen, for immediately after emancipation Negroes had no means to produce such themselves.⁴⁹

Without regard to the cause, public records indicate the arrest of a larger number of Negroes than whites in Virginia cities from 1870 to 1880.⁵⁰ This was especially true of Richmond. Official reports, moreover, show a greater number of Negroes than whites imprisoned in the State Penitentiary. In 1870, 145 whites and 616 Negroes were enrolled in that institution. In 1874, the number of white convicts was 150; of Negro, 646. In 1877, the numbers had increased to 241 white and 971 Negro convicts. The Negroes, women along with men, were leased to the service of railroad and other industrial corporations in large numbers. At the same time

⁴⁸ *Enquirer*, June 5, 16, 28, Sept. 7, Oct. 13, 18, Nov. 3, 13, 14, 15, 23, 26, Dec. 3, 1866; Jan. 3, Feb. 12, 19, 23, March 16, July 18, Aug. 12, 22, Sept. 2, 5, 6, 16, Oct. 3, 16, 31, Nov. 6, Dec. 2, 1867; Jan. 11, Feb. 15, 24, March 17, 20, April 4, 14, 21, May 19, June 20, July 13, Aug. 29, 1868; Jan. 18, April 14, May 22, 1869, Aug. 13, 1878.

⁴⁹ For some of these cases see the following: *Enquirer*, Aug. 2, 1866; Feb. 12, April 5, Sept. 13, 30, 1867; March 30, April 25, 28, Sept. 8, 1868; Jan. 9, 1869.

⁵⁰ Annual reports of the Mayor of Richmond, 1871 to 1880; excerpts from annual reports of City administrations, published in the *Dispatch*, 1870-1880.

the number of white prisoners leased to service was very small. In 1871, the number was 53; in other years, it rarely exceeded three or four.⁵¹ In 1871, the superintendent of the penitentiary reported 433 convicts as thus being disposed of. He made a significant comment in saying that if they were returned to the institution there would be no room for them, inasmuch as there were only 170 cells and they were small.

The discrimination exhibited in the matter of leasing convicts to service may suggest a cause of the disproportionately larger number of Negroes than whites sentenced to the State Penitentiary. When charged with the commission of a crime, the Negro seldom received the benefit of the doubt; and quite frequently when convicted of crime he suffered the maximum penalty of the offence.⁵² Illustrating the queer brand of justice Negroes sometimes received, the *Enquirer* reported the case of a Negro who set fire to the Hanover jail while confined there on a charge of lunacy. He was convicted of arson and lunacy and sentenced to the penitentiary for three years.⁵³ Negroes were often imprisoned for political reasons. The native whites availed themselves of every opportunity thus to embarrass Negro politicians. According to Miss Van Lew of Richmond, there were no less than 200 Negroes in the State Penitentiary because of their politics.⁵⁴

There were complaints to the effect that lunacy was rapidly increasing among Negroes just after the war. On Dec. 21, 1875, the *Dispatch* said: "Insanity among Africans has greatly increased since the abolition of slavery."⁵⁵ The same newspaper mentions this again on May 9, 1876.⁵⁶ On February 26, 1878, there came from Petersburg the report: "Lunacy seems to be startlingly on the increase among the colored people of our city."⁵⁷ Statistics, however, do not support

⁵¹ *Annual Reports, Report of the Superintendent of the Penitentiary*, 1871, pp. 6, 15; *Ibid.*, 1875-76, pp. 20-21; *Ibid.*, 1878, pp. 24-25.

⁵² See comment in *Norfolk Old Dominion*, November 3, 1866; also proceedings of courts as published in the public press, 1866-1880.

⁵³ *Enquirer*, Jan. 22, 1876.

⁵⁴ *Dispatch*, Jan. 2, 1872; July 1, Nov. 21, 1873; Sept. 28, Oct. 28, 1875; see also Rowell's *Contested Elections*.

⁵⁵ *Dispatch*, Dec. 21, 1875.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1876.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1878.

such extravagant statements. The stringent crisis through which the Negroes passed in readjusting themselves in freedom mentally unbalanced here and there a number sufficient to alarm the alarmist. The strain of the reconstruction period worked almost as much havoc among the whites similarly circumstanced. According to official reports, the number confined in the Central Lunatic Asylum varied from 147 in 1870 to 207 in 1874. In 1879, the number had increased to 326. Yet the number of hopelessly insane was small, because many of those confined recovered from year to year.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *Annual Reports, Report of Physician of the Central Lunatic Asylum*, 1871, p. 5, and *Ibid.*, 1874, p. 10.

CHAPTER III

THE FEAR OF A SOCIAL UPHEAVAL

In the beginning of freedom the Negroes were allowed only limited public privileges. The Virginia General Assembly did not authorize the Negroes to ride on public street cars prior to the passage of the Federal Civil Rights Law. Public opinion among the whites was against it. When the Civil Rights measure seemed to grant the right, the Negroes immediately brought against a street railway company in Richmond a suit to test the discrimination. This led to a hostile demonstration by the whites, necessitating a conference on the matter between the president of the road and General Schofield, the military commander in Virginia. As a result the right of the Negroes to ride on the cars was established despite the continued hostility of the whites. However, two classes of cars were provided. In the one, white women and white men accompanying them might ride; in the other, all persons might ride. This arrangement was continued until military reconstruction began.¹ The Virginia railway companies thereafter authorized Negroes to ride in any car subject to the common rules.²

On the steam cars and boats, however, the matter was not readily adjusted.^{2a} Negro travelers were commonly segregated into a front smoking coach, where the women were exposed to the 'coarse jibes' of drunken and otherwise offensive men of both races. In September, 1867, a Negro from Weldon, North Carolina, was put out of a first class coach on the train near Aquia Creek on the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad. He complained to General Brown and Commissioner Calhoun but obtained no redress. The *Enquirer* said by way of comment: "Would it not be as well for Negroes to be satisfied with comfortable accommodations on

¹ Dixon, *New America*, II, 331-332.

² Richmond *Enquirer* and Richmond *Times*, April 1866; also *Enquirer*, May 1867.

^{2a} *Ibid.*, Feb. 25, 1868.

railroads and steamboats, and not be giving themselves so much trouble about first class seats until they are fully recognized as a first class people.”³

As a result suits were brought before the Federal Courts charging a violation of the Civil Rights Law. The Courts upheld the principle, although in some cases the complainants were defeated.^{3a} A Negro woman named Katie Cummings received \$1,100 damages for being ejected from a first class car on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. She had bought a first class ticket from New York to Lynchburg, but met with discrimination when she reached Virginia.⁴ In 1871, James Sims recovered damages to the amount of \$1,800 for such ejection by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad.⁵ Judge J. J. Wright, of the South Carolina Supreme Court, sued the Richmond and Danville Railroad for being forcibly put out of a first class car on account of his color. The case was settled by compromise out of court on the terms that “the plaintiff should receive from the defendants \$1,250, and that each party should pay its own costs.”⁶ The watchman of the Chesapeake and Ohio Depot at Staunton was sentenced to four months’ imprisonment in 1876 for putting a Negro woman out of the passengers’ waiting room in violation of the Civil Rights Law.⁷

In the case of public amusements the Negroes faced the same difficulty. Negroes were admitted to the theatres in Richmond, but rigorously excluded from the “dress circle” in which the Civil Rights Law permitted them to sit. According to press reports, however, few Negroes undertook to exercise this privilege. Negro delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1867–1868 tried to attend on the basis of social equality “Wren and Company’s Varieties.” They were directed to the gallery, but they refused to go there and had their admission fees returned.⁸ On the other hand, without re-

³ *Enquirer*, Sept. 7, 1867.

^{3a} *Dispatch*, Sept. 3, 1875.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Jan. 28, 1871.

⁵ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1871.

⁶ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1875.

⁷ *Dispatch*, Oct. 20, 1876.

⁸ *Enquirer*, Feb. 1, 1868.

straint the freedmen attended circuses and similar out-of-door exhibitions in the smaller towns. Yet, they were nowhere admitted to the public inns and hotels of the whites in accordance with their legal rights. Proprietors prepared to charge the Negroes exorbitant prices for drinks and cigars, while they stood ready to sell such articles to "regular customers" at a discount. The public press suggested that hotels and inns surrender their licenses and become private boarding houses, if necessary, in order to prevent Negroes from dining in such places with whites. Referring to the efforts of Negroes to abolish such distinction, the editor of the *Dispatch* said on January 11, 1871: "It is idle for the Negro to suppose that there is to be any social equality between the black and the white races here. When they demand it they not only demand what it is impossible to obtain, but they disgrace themselves by lowering their own race since they aspire to association with another which they thus confess to be superior to theirs." ⁹

The whites generally objected to such concessions because it seemed to them the next step toward miscegenation.¹⁰ The racial purity advocates repeatedly denounced all such tendencies and warned the public as to consequences. Referring to a Negro escort whose action seemed to indicate the very appearance of miscegenation, the *Enquirer* said on September 6, 1866: "We have of late noticed a Miss about 13 years of age riding out on horseback, accompanied by a mounted negro as a guard. Under our ancient institutions there would have been no impropriety in this, as the distinction between the two races was then too marked to admit of any misconstructions, but under the new order of things, which renders the negro the equal if not the superior of the white race, we think it would be more appropriate for ladies to refrain from equestrian exercise unless they can obtain an escort of their own color." Emphasizing further the necessity for preventing the admixture of races, the editor of the *Enquirer* maintained on May 6, 1867, that the differences which nature has

⁹ *Dispatch*, Jan. 11, 1871.

¹⁰ See editorials in the *Enquirer* and *Dispatch* during these years.

made must be recognized, although the question of inferiority or superiority may not be taken into consideration.¹¹

This alarm among the whites might have been due to some extent to such liberal observations as the following from W. H. Dixon who visited Virginia about this time: "One chance the white man had, and still might have—of living here, in Virginia, also down in Alabama, Mississippi, and the Carolinas," said he, "a social and political life apart from his English brother in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio; but the course to be taken by him is one from which it is commonly believed that his pride must revolt, and his taste recoil,—a family alliance with the negro race.

"Long before the ugly word miscegenation came into use, and young damsels in ringlets and chignons stood up in public pleading for a mixture of breeds, many sincere, and some serious, men had preached the dogma of a saving quality in the negro blood. Channing had prepared the way for Anna Dickenson. In their flowery prose, the New England teachers had bestowed upon their negro client in the South an emotional nature far above anything that his poor white brother in the North could boast. On the hard and selfish side of his intellect, a white man might be cursed with keener power; the point was moot; but in all that concerned his moral nature,—the religious instincts, the family affections, the social graces—the negro was declared to be a softer, sweeter, and superior being. He was far more sensitive to signs and dreams, to the voice of birds, to the cries of children, to the heat of noon, to the calm of night. He had a finer ear for song, a quicker relish for the dance. He loved colour with a wiser love. He had a deeper yearning after places; a fresher delight in worship; a livelier sense of the Fatherhood of God. These fancy pictures of the negro—drawn in a New England study, a thousand miles from a rice-field and a cotton plantation—culminated in Uncle Tom.

"Many good people in the North had begun to think it would be well for these pale and bilious shadows of the South, to marry their sons and daughters to such highly-gifted and emotional creatures, with a view to restoring the strength, and

¹¹ *Dispatch*, Sept. 6, 1866, and May 6, 1867.

thickening the fibre, of their race. When the War broke out, this feeling spread; as it raged and stormed, this feeling deepened: and now when the War is over, and the South lies prostrate, there is a party in New England, counting women in its ranks, who would be glad, if they could find a way, to marry the whole white population, living south of Richmond, to the blacks. Again and again I have heard men, grave of face and clean of life, declare in public, and to sympathising hearers, that a marriage of white and black would improve the paler stock. In every case these marriages were to happen a long way off. I have met more than one lady who did not shrink from saying that, in her belief, it would be a great improvement for some of the fair damsels of Charleston and of Savannah to wed black husbands. I never met a lady who said it would be well for her own girls to do so.

"The War has wrought a change in favour of the negro, who is now a petted mortal in the North, to be mentioned as 'the coloured gentleman,' not as 'the damned black rascal' of former times. He rides in the street cars; he has a right to sit by his white brother in a railway; he may enter the same church, and pray in the adjoining pew. Public men make speeches for him, female lecturers expound him. I have heard Captain Anthony, a New England orator, declare that if he wanted to find a good heart in the Southern States, he should look for it under a sable skin, if he wanted to find a good head, he should look for it under wooly hair. That strange thing was said in Kansas, in one of the cleverest speeches I have ever heard.

"The fact is, the negro is here the coming man. Parties being nicely poised, the dark men being likely to get votes, they are even now, in view of that heirship, courted, flattered, and cajoled."¹²

As a matter of fact, considerable miscegenation ensued in spite of the efforts of the advocates of eugenics, racial integrity, and "White America." The press made frequent attacks on disorderly houses openly kept and boldly patronized by men and women of both races. The press especially denounced mixed marriages, but they occurred here and

¹² W. H. Dixon, *New America*, II, 324-327.

there.¹³ On July 21, 1866, we learn from a news item in the *Enquirer* that in Sydney "one of the gallant boys in blue gave his hand with his heart in it to an ebo damsel who firmly believes that a 'white man's good as a nigger' vided he 'haves hisself.'" ¹⁴ On July 23, 1866, Perry W. Carey of Company G, Second Battallion, United States Infantry, was charged with "unlawfully marrying Henrietta Johnson, negro."¹⁵ On September 13, 1866, it was reported that "a marriage ceremony between a negro and a white girl was to have taken place in Norfolk on Sunday, but the intended bridegroom getting wind of the fact that some young men had made preparations to treat him to a coat of tar and cotton failed to come to time."¹⁶

According to the Norfolk *Virginian* quoted February 15, 1867, a Negro named Jackson Hayley appeared with Susan Fly, a woman "with a white skin" hailing from Northampton county and asked for a license. The clerk refused to issue it. The couple showed unusual anger."¹⁷ On February 22, 1867, a Negro tried to marry a white woman near Marion. He was arrested. He gave bail. He then absconded with his white "dulcinea" to parts unknown.¹⁸ On May 25, 1867, it was reported that "a negro married a white woman in Winchester." Referring to this the *Enquirer* said: "an amalgamation marriage is among the sensations of the town of Winchester. The groom is a black man raised and formerly owned by a citizen of Winchester; the bride is a white woman for some time a resident of Winchester. The marriage ceremony was performed by a colored clergyman."¹⁹ On Saturday morning, September 28, 1867, the *Enquirer* said that "a negro man married a so-called white woman at Wytheville, last Tuesday night, the ceremony being performed by a

¹³ *Enquirer*, May 2, 12, June 27, July 10, Aug. 3, 17, Sept. 3, 8, 1866; July 24, Aug. 7, Aug. 26, Oct. 29, Nov. 12, 1867; January 16, 1868; March 3, 23, Oct. 5, 6, 1868; March 27, 1869.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1866.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1866.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Sept. 13, 1866.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 15, 1867.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1867.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, May 25, 1867.

negro parson.”²⁰ On October 26, 1867, we are informed that “a white married woman, named Reese, living in Amherst county, packed up her duds a few days since, and eloped from her husband, under the protection of a big, buck negro. The ‘happy couple,’ it is to be hoped, are enjoying a due amount of bliss.”²¹

“A few nights since, a man named Sanford M. Dodge, supposed to be a white man, a delegate from Mecklenburg county to the late Black Crook Convention,” said a reporter in the *Enquirer*, June 5, 1868, “was seen by a gentleman of this city promenading one of the principal streets with a negro woman on either arm. Dodge is one of the lowest and filthiest of the carpet bag race, and we always had serious doubts whether he was a white man. He is said to be a jack-leg preacher of some kind, was born in New York, went to Iowa, and came from there to Mecklenburg county where he worked as a day laborer in a distillery until it was closed for violations of the internal revenue laws of the United States, perpetrated by the proprietors. He then turned politician and was sent to the Black Crook²² by negro votes. If either party is degraded by the social equality of such people with negroes, it is the latter.”²³

On July 30, 1868, there appeared the complaint that “some of the Yankees who have come to this city since the close of the war have illustrated their belief in the doctrine of negro equality by marrying negro women. We heard yesterday of two cases in which white men from the North had married mulattoes. The marriages were solemnized, we learn, in Washington.”²⁴

“Yesterday morning, Joseph Patterson, white, and a Northern man by birth, and Topsy Patterson, his wife, a black negro, and Sallie Clark, another negro,” according to a Richmond reporter on September 1, 1868, “were brought before the police court to answer for assaulting and beating a

²⁰ *Enquirer*, Sept. 28, 1867.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1867.

²² “Black Crook Convention” here means the legal body composed of whites and blacks who framed the constitution under which the State was reconstructed.

²³ *Enquirer*, June 5, 1868.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1868.

mulatto woman named Carrie Magruder, The spectacle of a white man with a black wife was a singular one. No one knew where the hymenal knot was tied. The parties were fined and discharged."²⁵

"A mean looking creature, calling himself Henry Dunham, a native of Jamaica," said the *Bedford Sentinel*, as reported in the *Enquirer* November 10, 1868, "appeared to our county clerk, a few days ago, for license to marry a negro woman. The clerk, of course, refused, informing him that the laws of Virginia did not permit marriages between white people and negroes. Dunham became very indignant. He grew so insolent that he had to be led by the collar out of the office."²⁶

On February 5, 1869, a white girl was first reported in the *Danville Register* as murdered by a Negro named Monroe Toler, alias Dillard. The paper later said, however: "But she was not murdered, for on Sunday evening last the couple (negro man and white girl) were seen on the Franklin turnpike near Danville coming in this direction. They were pursued by a brother of the girl and by Constable Keats of this county; and it is thought that it was the negro's aim to make his way into North Carolina with his companion." He was caught and tried for abduction.²⁷

On November 29, 1870, the *Roanoke Times* is quoted as reporting a race war on Back Creek. Seven whites and two Negroes were wounded. The trouble was that a white girl had eloped with a Negro and when the whites went to the Negro's home searching for the girl his friends and relatives fired on them. The paper said: "Mr. Reynolds living on Back Creek, has had in his employ for some time a negro man, who, it seems, became desperately in love with his daughter, which was mutual, seduced her, and on that day eloped with her to parts unknown. Miss Reynolds, we are told, is about eighteen years of age and handsome. The negro is much older, ginger color, and homely. We also learn that she was engaged to a respectable white man, and

²⁵ *Enquirer*, Sept. 1, 1868.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 10, 1868.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1869.

was to have been married in a short time. What induced her to take this course no one can tell, unless to carry out fully the doctrines of the party to which her father belongs—the Radical Negro—equality part—that a negro is as good as a white man.”²⁸

On February 3, 1873, a letter from Bristol-Goodson states that a Negro and a white woman from Pulaski came to that place and pretending to be both colored obtained a license and married. They were arrested. The Negro it was said was “as black as the ace of spades, and as dirty and as vile a looking darkey as is common to be seen.” “The white woman,” continues the report, “is about twenty one years of age and but for the degrading position she occupied was quite good-looking.”²⁹

These unions, as in the case last mentioned, were condemned by public opinion,³⁰ and the statute prohibiting them was at first rigorously enforced against Negroes.³¹ “A negro preacher, whose name our informant does not remember,” said a reporter in the *Whig*, May 20, 1870, “was tried before the county court of Smyth, on Tuesday, for uniting in marriage a white woman and a negro man contrary to the laws of the State. He was sentenced to pay a fine of \$200 and to be imprisoned in the county jail for four months.”³² “Ellick Calloway (colored),” said the *Enquirer*, February 23, 1872, “is now confined in our jail, charged with abducting a white girl to Reidville where they were made one. But Ellick avows that the “ducting was t’other side of the house—the gal carried him. The negroes have employed able counsel to defend him, and have no doubt that the trial will be as interesting as the case has been unusual.”³³

On December 2, 1874, moreover, the *Dispatch* reported “that a negro named James Stoneham, who had been fined fifty dollars for cohabitation with a white woman, had left

²⁸ *Dispatch*, Nov. 29, 1870.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 3, 1873.

³⁰ See accounts in the *Dispatch* and the *Enquirer*, March 1875.

³¹ See *Code of Virginia*, 1860, 1873, 1887, Chapter on Divorce. See *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1878–1879.

³² *Whig*, May 20, 1870.

³³ *Enquirer*, Feb. 23, 1872.

for parts unknown, accompanied by his partner in guilt, who had been previously fined a large amount for the same offence.”³⁴ “About a week ago,” said a reporter in the *Enquirer*, January 30, 1875, “a colored man named Ben Booker eloped from near Paynesville in Amelia county, with a white girl named Mary C. Davis, aged 15 years. Efforts had been made to trace their whereabouts, and they were finally found in Cumberland, some fifteen miles from here. They were brought to this place by officer Blanton. They claimed to be husband and wife, but the hard-hearted officer refused to see it in that light, and the modern Othello was sent on to Amelia county to answer for his crime and the weeping Desdemona left in Farmville to await the coming of her father.”³⁵

The case of Mahala White and Andrew Kinney, a Negro, of Augusta County, brought up an interesting question. These two were living in a state of cohabitation in 1878. When threatened with punishment, they fled to Washington, D. C., married, and returned to Virginia, where they were arrested. The husband was convicted of a violation of the State statute forbidding the marriage of a white person and a Negro, and fined \$500. His counsel appealed the case. But the higher court, while sustaining the decision, “held that in the eyes of Virginia a marriage between blacks and whites, stood on the same footing as an incestuous or polygamous marriage, an offence against public morals which the law was made to protect; and the fact that such a marriage was made in another State did not render the contracting parties less guilty when they returned within the jurisdiction of this State, and lived as man and wife.”³⁶ Counsel for the defendant took the case to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia. That tribunal sustained the decision of the lower court, holding such a marriage a mere evasion of the statute “which declares that all such marriages are absolutely void.”³⁷

³⁴ *Dispatch*, Dec. 2, 1874.

³⁵ *Enquirer*, Jan. 30, 1875.

³⁶ Quoted in the *Dispatch*, April 6, 1878.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1878. There were four other mixed marriages in Augusta county.

The recognition of the civil rights of the Negroes and their increasing prestige in the economic and political spheres, however, counteracted the proscription of those who intermarried. Poor white women sometimes chose Negro husbands because these men of color were more wealthy and influential than the available males of their own race. There were four such cases in Buckingham county.^{37a} Probably the most interesting of all was that of R. T. Coleman in Cumberland county. He was the owner of a large farm and acquired considerable property of various kinds. He was remarkable in that he distinguished himself as a horse trader, a politician, a preacher, and the husband of three white women. They were short-lived, but he was business-like enough to have them insured to the amount of \$1,000 each. When he married the third time there was a specific law against even such persons living as husbands and wives in Virginia. But he evaded the law by marrying in the North and establishing his wife in a separate home a few yards from his. He was not disturbed and enjoyed the highest respect of both races.^{37b}

The strict social ostracism practiced by the whites, however, encouraged the development of racial solidarity among the blacks. It forced the latter to the position of becoming self-sufficient. Primarily interested in the social feature of soldiery, for example, the freedmen evinced a singular zeal in organizing military units, inasmuch as the native whites had barred them therefrom. For a while, the public press, fearful lest "the rougher element of the Negroes might be preparing for a war of the races," vigorously protested against the "nightly drilling and parading of armed negroes" in the principal cities of the State on almost every local or national holiday. They celebrated the ninth of April, the anniversary of the surrender of Robert E. Lee, and the twenty-second of September and the first of January, the Emancipation Proclamation days; but they later increased the number with observances of the days on which had been completed the ratifi-

^{37a} Dr. C. G. Woodson personally knew them.

^{37b} This statement is based on the testimonies of various neighbors of R. T. Coleman, on county records, and on the proceedings of Negro organizations like the *Minutes of the Slate River Baptist Association*.

cation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the passage of the Reconstruction and Civil Rights bills. Furthermore, the Negroes all but monopolized the celebration of George Washington's Birthday and the Fourth of July. Standing aloof from the "ludicrous performances" of the freedmen in the rough, the whites temporarily ceased to manifest openly the active interest once shown in the observance of national holidays.³⁸

On the ninth of July 1866, the *Enquirer* said: "If our citizens cannot prevent the insolent demonstrations of the Negro populace, they can mark the prime movers, and do much to debar others from following their example. If persons in their employ wish to participate in these insulting saturnalia, the employers cannot prevent them from so doing, but they can inform them that their services are no longer needed. Let our citizens refuse to give employment to these participators in these processions, gotten up under the auspices of a handful of fanatics, for the sole purpose of insulting our people, and our word for it the number who join in these demonstrations will be wonderfully diminished. There are hosts of industrious white men out of employment who would be glad to fill many places now occupied by strapping insolent negroes, and it is the *duty* of every good citizen to employ these whenever practicable."³⁹

On the 7th of July, 1873, the correspondent of the *Dispatch* from Petersburg showed a slightly different attitude, saying: "Nearly all the attention extended yesterday to the 'glorious Fourth' was accorded it by the truly loyal representatives of the colored race. The white people generally—such of them, at least, as had holiday—went fishing, or otherwise idled and rested; but the Senegambians were out in full glory, and crowded the pavements from dawn to dewey eve. A special train from Richmond and another from Gaston brought over large delegations from those points, and a train from this city conveyed to the capital another large crowd of negroes.

³⁸ *Enquirer*, July 2 and 9, and Sept. 14, 1866; April 5, Sept. 6, 1867; Oct. 15, 1867; Nov. 28, 1871; Aug. 21, 1872; Jan. 21, 1873; March 25, 1873; Oct. 7, 1873; July 6, 1875; April 21, 1876; April 23, 1878; May 17, 1878; July 3, 1879.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1866.

One of the features of the day was the parade of the colored company, the Petersburg Guard, under Captain Hill. There were about fifty in line, and their drill was greatly admired. The march was followed by a multitude that darkened the face of the earth."⁴⁰

Later, after the State had been reconstructed by the native whites, the hostile sentiment so completely changed that the public press all but lauded the Negro units of the voluntary State guard.⁴¹ The white people praised the excellence of the military manoeuvres, and the efficient leadership of the Negro officers. They offered prizes for the annual contests of the Negro companies; and high officials of the State acted as judges of award in the competitive drills. Referring to one of the Negro companies, the *Whig* said on August 30, 1871: "The Attucks Guard (of Richmond) is composed of the very best and most respectable colored men in the community."⁴² On July 18, 1877, the *Dispatch* said: "Virginia probably has the finest, best drilled, best equipped colored militia of any state in the Union, and we hope it may continue."⁴³ In 1880, the "Colored Volunteer Guard of Virginia" consisted of eighteen uniformed companies distributed among the large cities.

Fraternal organizations appeared during these years to supply a new need. Unlike other organizations they provided social associations for both men and women, although some restricted membership to one sex. Secret in principle and benevolent in purpose, these societies afforded unique opportunity for community effort, the promotion of racial consciousness and the development of leadership. As a consequence they made a wide appeal to all classes of Negroes immediately after the war. At the time, however, the whites, believing them political rather than fraternal in practice, opposed their growth; but the development of the dominant fraternal principle soon allayed this hostility. White orders, of course,

⁴⁰ *Dispatch*, July 7, 1873.

⁴¹ *Enquirer*, Oct. 10, 1866; Jan. 2 and 3, 1867; Feb. 12, 1869. *Dispatch*, Feb. 24, 29, 1872; July 18, 1873; April 3, 1878.

⁴² *Whig*, Aug. 30, 1871.

⁴³ *Dispatch*, July 18, 1877.

refused official recognition of these societies, but the activities of the latter rapidly expanded.

These societies were embryonic industrial insurance companies of social tendencies. While they provided association in their weekly or bi-weekly meetings, they also offered limited employment to their official managers and paid sick benefits and death claims. Furthermore, the societies represented the Negroes in all public demonstrations in which the blacks shared; and they played a prominent part in all festivals and celebrations conducted by the Negro group. Their officers were generally the leaders in other phases of the social life; and ambitious young men found a connection with these societies essential to advancement in public life. In short, the fraternal orders became a dominant influence in the social life of the Negroes and because of such vital connection experienced a rapid growth. In 1866, there were more than thirty secret orders in Richmond; in 1878, the number was legion. Among the national orders the Masons, Knights Templars, Odd Fellows, Sons of Temperance, Good Templars, Saint Lukes, Good Samaritans, and True Reformers had statewide organizations comprising memberships, varying from two hundred to one thousand.⁴⁴

Inasmuch as the parade and celebrations attracted unusual attention when taking place on a large scale in urban centers, they offered an occasion for excursions. The excursion appealed especially to Negroes because of the opportunity to go so far from home at such low rates. Many of the freedmen had never been as far as ten miles from the place of their nativity at the time of their emancipation. They, then, gladly availed themselves of the opportunity to see some of the world. As these excursions brought considerable income to the railroad companies, the cooperation of the common carriers could always be counted on. The Negroes of Virginia, therefore, gave a new meaning to holidays and excursions.

These excursions interested the traveler very much. "On the day of my visit," said Edward King, referring to his trip

⁴⁴ Thomas, *My American Tour*, 202; *Whig*, Feb. 24, 1871; *Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 1875; *Dispatch*, Jan. 1, 1878. Accounts of the social and religious agencies were usually published in the daily papers in the first issue of the year.

to Petersburg, "a colored Masonic excursion had arrived from Richmond, and the streets were filled with stout negro men, decently clothed, and their wives and sweethearts, attired in even louder colors than those affected by Northern servant girls. Each was talking vociferously; officials, in flaunting regalia and sweating at every pore, rushed to and fro; bands thundered and urchins screamed. The Virginia negro has almost the French passion for *fête*-days."⁴⁵

Referring to an excursion from Richmond to Fredericksburg, in 1878, the *Dispatch* facetiously said: "The Colored people were the pioneers in the great excursion movement. Long before the whites ever thought of the glory that might be achieved by this sort of thing they were in the field—rather in the cars. When in addition to having been the capital of the Confederacy, the birthplace of numerous great men, the place that has the biggest grave-yards, flouring mills, and tobacco-factories in the country, the historian writes upon the scroll of fame that Richmond is the champion excursion centre, then be it remembered that to our humble but ever faithful colored friends no small part of the honor is due."⁴⁶

In addition to such entertainments and demonstrations, however, the social life of the Negroes developed along other lines. As slaves they had been fond of dancing to lively tunes; and many had become experts at "cutting pigeon wings." But as the years went by, the freedmen discontinued this sort of dancing and singing in public. The men ceased the wrestling and kicking bouts which had been a chief pastime of their fathers immediately after the war.⁴⁷ Some turned to the artistic. As early as December 1866, the *Enquirer* reported that Negroes of Lynchburg were giving theatrical representations.⁴⁸ In 1874, the school of Waynesboro rendered a three act comedy drama requiring histrionic ability not generally found among the whites. With regard to the performance the Staunton *Vindicator* said: "Curiosity had filled the house densely with white citizens, who were

⁴⁵ King, *The Great South*, 580.

⁴⁶ *Dispatch*, July 5, 1878.

⁴⁷ McDonald, *Life in Old Virginia*, 177-178.

⁴⁸ *Enquirer*, Dec. 6, 1866.

quite taken back when they found something else besides curiosity was to be justified, and before the play closed, instead of the shouts of laughter that had been purposed in expectation of the ludicrous, there was hearty applause of some remarkably good acting.”⁴⁹

In a similar manner Richmond Negro talent impressed the public in 1880. The performance was held in the Virginia opera house before a mixed audience including the white élite of Richmond. Remarking on the effort, the *Dispatch* said: “As to the performance, while it was strictly *Pinafore* in a musical scene, it was nevertheless very creditable when we consider the poor opportunities these people have had, and the very imperfect instruction the company received. . . . Taken altogether the performance was quite creditable to the colored people concerned.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Whig*, April 20, 1879.

⁵⁰ *Dispatch*, July 6, 1880.

CHAPTER IV

ACCEPTING THE SITUATION

At the close of the Civil War conditions in Virginia were otherwise perplexing. As the constant theatre of strife the State suffered economic exhaustion. In the regions most exposed to the armies, homes had been destroyed, mills had been burned, cattle, hogs and sheep had been swept away and so many plough animals had been driven off that an extensive cultivation of crops on the already long worn-out lands seemed impossible. Seeds were scarce. Credit was difficult to obtain. Yet, travelers stated that the desolation was not so great as reported; and Edward A. Pollard, the Virginia historian, writing of the undeveloped wealth and virgin soils of the State, showed that important regions traversed by the armies were by no means completely desolated.¹ On the whole, accounts were unanimous that economic conditions were distressing—probably worse than in any other Southern State.² Besides, the labor system had been disrupted in Virginia as elsewhere in the South. Labor, to some extent, had become dislocated and restless. Some, like the editor of the *Norfolk Day Book*, said: "Import coolies to take the places of the freedmen"; but others like the editor of the *Enquirer* said: "We do not want our Southern population debased by the importation and admixture of inferior breeds of men."³

Virginia, like other rebellious parts of the country, moreover, was thrown into uncomfortable confusion. There was considerable fear that the blacks would rise against the whites in a racial war which might afflict the States with worse calamities than what had been entailed by the recent conflict. Feeling that the Federal troops in the State were responsible

¹ Pollard, in *Old and New* (1872), V, 279-282.

² Virginia newspapers, 1865-1867; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*, 19-20; Trowbridge, *The South*, 91 et seq.

³ *Enquirer*, July 11 and 26, 1866.

for this upheaval, the native whites poured out their wrath on the Yankee soldiers stationed in Virginia. Race hate, too, was running high. The white man repeatedly reminded the "nigger" of his place in keeping with the custom of yore; and the latter, conscious of the protection of the Federal Government, contemptuously referred to members of the haughty race as "secesh," "rebs" and "poor white trash."⁴ The presence of Negro soldiers and the organization and frequent drilling of Negro military orders decidedly aggravated the situation.⁵ Racial clashes, therefore, became the order of the day.^{5a} These generally had no more disastrous results than a few broken teeth, swollen eyes, or bruised heads,⁶ which the observer easily noticed in traveling through the state;⁷ but

⁴ *Enquirer*, Mar. 28, 1867. See also Claudio Jannet, *Les États Unis Contemporains*, 413-414.

⁵ *Enquirer*, July 25, Aug. 2, 1866; Nov. 2, 19, 1867; George Rose, *The Great Country*, 158.

^{5a} *Enquirer*, June 19, 22, July 25, 1866; July 20, 30, Sept. 4, Dec. 19, 24, 1867; July 8, Sept. 10, 1868.

⁶ *Nation*, I, 75.

⁷ Skinner said in 1866: "I perceive that at present there is need of caution among Northern men who would settle in Richmond. There are too many grey waistcoats in private life which have brass buttons covered with bombazine, to make it safe to utter Union sentiment at all times. The fiery spirit of Virginia will brook no restraint, and when I entered the Hustings Court I found that a case had just been called on in which a Richmond editor had attempted to cowhide a New York contemporary, and had struggled with him until their heads went through a glass screen in the office of the principal hotel. This I learnt from eye-witnesses, though the prosecutor did not appear.

"Lively, amusing place! My return should have been hastened by a sense of what was in store for me. I reached the hotel. A crowd had collected; a single combat was going forward. No charge for admittance; no hat sent round to receive our contributions.

"'What's the matter?' said I, addressing an intelligent darkey.

"'Wal, sar,' said he, 'it's a difficulty between two gentlemen.'

"They wrestled up, they wrestled down, rapid pommelling was followed by a determined clinch, and the hotel clerk was base enough to call a policeman. When I enquired at my leisure as to how this difficulty had begun, I was informed that a citizen with a grey waistcoat had accused another citizen of being a Yankee spy, which accusation led to open hostility.

"And, later on, we had some sport between fresh disputants. A quiet young man from the North startled me at dinner-time by exhibiting his loaded six-shooter. He was quiet but satirical, that young man from the North, and he had written to a Northern journal a letter which had awakened the deepest disgust of a citizen of Richmond. It was understood that there must be a 'difficulty'

in not a few cases both Negroes and whites were actually killed.⁸ Here and there, moreover, there were reported clashes between Negroes and Federal soldiers; for sometimes the latter did not seem to get along much better with the Negroes than did the native whites.⁹

In this unsettled condition, the State was controlled by the Federal military forces. But on May 9, 1865, President Johnson restored civil government in the State. Moreover, the General Government had already created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in recognition of the social revolution effected by the war. The Bureau commenced operations in Virginia in the spring of 1865. It was established to help the freedmen adjust themselves to the new conditions, and to apportion abandoned and confiscated lands among the Negroes. The powers, however, were quickly extended in response to the complicated, perplexing differences constantly arising between the native whites and freedmen.¹⁰

The Freedmen's Bureau helped to make emancipation a reality to the freedmen of Virginia. The latter required the provision of special means for their protection and education, until they should become reasonably familiar with the responsibilities of a free people. The Negroes needed assistance in their adjustment to a system of free labor with which their former masters had had little experience. They had to be scattered from localities where the exigencies of war had brought them together in large numbers. They had among them the sick, the aged, the youthful, and the able-bodied, all unable to obtain employment. The former masters who had just fought a war to sustain slavery could not be expected to serve the interests of these people. Their condition, there-when they met. Here was the first gentleman, ready armed as we could see; and, by Saint George! here came the second.

"There was a moment of uncertainty, a moment in which it seemed probable that the parties would adjust their difference in our very midst. Then more moderate counsels prevailed, he who had last appeared withdrew from sight, and our meal was peacefully concluded."—J. E. H. Skinner, *After the Storm*, 315–316.

⁸ *Enquirer*, May 9, June 12, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, July 3, 19, 23, Aug. 21, Sept. 12, 24, Dec. 3, 1866; March 28, May 23, June 17, July 25, Sept. 5, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 28, 1867; Feb. 15, May 15, June 9, 11, Aug. 4, Nov. 28, 1868.

⁹ *Enquirer*, June 1, July 23, 1866; May 10, 1867; May 28, Dec. 23, 1868.

¹⁰ The Bureau was created by an Act of Congress of March 3, 1865.

fore, demanded assistance through the transition from slavery to freedom.

The establishment of such an agency was an act of wisdom necessitated by the dominant sentiment of the native whites toward the Union. Embittered by the loss of slave property, and humiliated over their defeat in war, the late secessionists all but religiously detested their "conqueror." Of this attitude, a traveler has written convincingly. "The loyalty of the people," said he, "is generally of a negative sort, it is simply disloyalty subdued. They submit to the power which has mastered them, but they do not love it; nor is it reasonable to expect that they should. Many of them lately in the rebellion, are, I think, honestly convinced that secession was a great mistake, and that the preservation of the Union, even with the loss of slavery, is better for them than any such separate government as that of which they had a bitter taste. Yet they do not feel much affection for the hand which corrected their error. They acquiesce quietly in what cannot be helped, and sincerely desire to make the best of their altered circumstances."¹¹ Referring to the lack of unanimity in this feeling, however, the same observer remarked: "There is another class which would still be glad to dismember the country, and whose hatred of the government is radical and intense. But this class is small."¹²

Immediately following peace, however, it was generally believed that most Virginians acquiesced in the results of the war. It was felt that the majority would gladly return to the Union on the basis of any adjustment except Negro suffrage. The old leaders, moreover, were apparently subdued; and no new ones had taken their places. Some were apprehensive lest they might be convicted and punished as traitors, but as soon as President Johnson commenced his system of extending liberal pardons a reaction set in. The late dis-unionists became bold and defiant. They began to talk of their rights, and to argue constitutional questions with respect to the restoration to the Union. In the meantime, ex-Confederate proprietors of the public press conducted their

¹¹ Trowbridge, *The South*, 584.

¹² *Ibid.*, 584.

papers with but little restriction, although some journals suffered temporary suppression. Thus the public press joined with the leaders of the lost cause to foment among the masses a spirit of disaffection that increased in proportion as the old leaders succeeded in dominating the new State government.¹³

In spite of the fact that free speech was under ban, that men had been silenced because of attacks on the new order of things, Virginia had to speak out. Openly indignant or strictly political meetings could not be easily held, but frequent assemblies of religious bodies, agricultural societies, educational institutions, and memorial associations offered the opportunity for frequent speech.^{13a} While these discourses showed a dissatisfaction with the new method of government in the State and in some cases actually justified the lost cause, they at the same time tried to make it appear that they were willing to "accept the situation." Among the most influential of these speakers should be mentioned Henry A. Wise, A. H. Stuart, and W. T. Sutherlin. These, in the order in which they appear here, may be considered as representing the radical, the moderate, and the constructive attitudes of native Virginians with respect to the new regime.

The very nature of Henry A. Wise was such that he had to express himself. He could not be silent. He was popular as a speaker throughout the State and he usually attracted large crowds. He devoted a considerable portion of his time and energy to speech-making, although engaged in the practice of law. His popularity was due to the fact that he voiced the sentiments of the large majority of the aristocratic native whites. On July 19, 1866, Wise made a speech in Norfolk on the rebuilding of churches but immediately drifted into the righteous cause of the rebellion. He had done no wrong. Virginia had made no mistakes. He denounced especially the iron-clad oath. However, he was glad slavery was gone. Although fraught with strange views this speech was not quite so radical as the one he had delivered earlier at Alexandria.¹⁴

¹³ See testimony of John Minor Botts, John F. Lewis, and John B. Baldwin before the Reconstruction Committee, *Reports of Committees, First Session, 39th Congress*. See also Reid's *After the War: A Southern Tour*, 295-303.

^{13a} *Enquirer*, June 26, 27, July 2, 1866; Jan. 4, Aug. 23, 1867.

¹⁴ *Enquirer*, July 19, 1866.

Speaking on August 9, 1866, Wise said that he was willing to accept the results of the war. "Slavery," said he further, "was a weakness if not a wickedness—a wickedness because a weakness, to which I am not willing ever to expose my descendants, for fear of a humiliation like that to which I have been subjected. I praise God daily for my deliverance from both its negrodom and niggerdom—very significant words, which are of very different meanings, illustrated by the scenes and events of the passing hour. But the emancipation of the Negro in the South has been sudden, shocking, harsh and inhuman in the extreme to both master and servant, to both races, white and black; wantonly cruel to the white master and crushing to the black freedman. He is now a freedman but without a friend. But he is a freedman. I am now free of responsibility for his care and comfort, and, I repeat I am content. I honor the Negro for his exemplary conduct during the conflict, and I will try my best to befriend him. He must in justice be allowed a large margin of indulgence for his sudden douche of liberty; not of license or insolence, but no one shall oppress or insult him without my remonstrance and resistance. He must be encouraged to work and be paid his fair wages and be dealt with justly. . . . The negro, like the Indian, left to himself, will pass away unless wisdom and charity combined shall be allowed to overrule the worst passions which trade in human misery and misfortune." ¹⁵

Although Wise was unwilling to concede that the South was at fault, A. H. H. Stuart, a sort of a mediator, took the position that both sides were at fault, a statement to which neither the editor of the *Enquirer* nor most of the native whites would then subscribe. Addressing the literary societies of the University of Virginia in June 1866, Stuart said that he was willing to accept the issues of the war, secession and slavery as doomed, although at the same time he could not but eulogize Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee. Referring to the Negro, he thought something serious might happen in the case of a much larger population. Yet he believed that the four millions of freedmen could be easily "managed" without

¹⁵ *Enquirer*, Aug. 9, 1866.

serious danger of a conflict of races. He believed that it was wiser "to believe that slavery having fulfilled its appropriate mission of opening the country, clearing the forest, draining the swamps and preparing the soil for the occupancy of the white race, was destined to extinction." "In this aspect," said he, "its over-throw may be regarded not as a calamity but as a blessing in disguise. Let us then indulge in no vain regrets. Let us bury the dead past out of our sight. Let us cultivate a spirit of cheerful helpfulness and look with confidence to the future.

"You, young gentlemen," continued Stuart, "have an important duty to perform. . . . It will be for you also to care for the unfortunate and dependent race that has been cast amongst us. Let us all remember that no blame attaches to the Negro. They were our nurses in childhood, the companions of our sports in boyhood, and our humble and faithful servants through life. Without any agency on their part the ties that bound them to us have been rudely broken. Let us extend to them a helping hand in the hour of their destitution. We can give them employment, and guide their feeble steps in the paths of virtue and knowledge. Thousands, who in the first intoxication of freedom, wandered from their homes, have returned to seek shelter and protection from their former masters. They should be received kindly and encouraged in well doing, and we should spare no pains to improve their condition and qualify them as far as may be practicable, for usefulness in our community."¹⁶

Doubtless, the wisest of these spokesmen of the hour, however, was W. T. Sutherlin, a planter and manufacturer of some importance. He believed that the great remedy for the South was not to go into politics, but to go to work.¹⁷ Speaking of Negro labor before the Agricultural Convention in Richmond on Nov. 22, 1866, Sutherlin made an impression. He said that as a manufacturer of tobacco he had been accustomed for many years to control large numbers of Negroes and he had always held their value as laborers in high estimation. For the purpose of farm labor, he was

¹⁶ *Enquirer*, July 3, 1866.

¹⁷ *Enquirer*, Aug. 21, 1867.

satisfied that there was "no race more valuable than the Negro; for his docility, tractability and affectionate disposition rendered him just the material desirable and necessary." On his plantation in southwestern Georgia he employed a large number in raising cotton, and his experience there, in the matter of management, had convinced him of the propriety of basing his calculations upon a consideration of the Negro's nature. He had an intelligent overseer, and the domestic arrangements of his plantation were regulated in accordance with the principles which should govern a systematic prosecution of business. His laborers were employed at stipulated prices, and each required to perform the duties undertaken by the contract. At regular periods settlements were made, and each one's account balanced by payment. Upon his plantation he raised whatever was required for the sustenance of his people, and thus secured an immunity from the annoyance of outside influences,—the loss of time by his laborers and their dissatisfaction and discomfort on account of small deprivations. He was convinced that this was the wisest plan of operation. Many gentlemen had complained of the annoyance given by the Freedmen's Bureau agents, but he had never had a Yankee on his plantation, although there was a Federal garrison near by. He was opposed to dividing up the plantations. Settle Negroes on the place and create in their minds the feeling of local attachment and domiciliary influences. These laborers would form a sort of peasantry whose presence on a place would give a purchaser the best assurance of obtaining labor for its cultivation. Yet white men must go to work, not merely watch the Negro work, work with their hands. He would increase the acreage under cultivation. Differing somewhat from many others grappling with the economic problems of the hour, Sutherlin looked largely to Negro labor for the rebuilding of waste places in the State. He thought that disease might carry the Negro away and that he might become a thing of the past like the Indian. "Yet however important it may be to introduce other laborers, the negro is now the only kind we have, and it is the part of wisdom to use that to the best advantage."¹⁸

¹⁸ *Enquirer*, Nov. 24, 1866.

These constructive suggestions of Sutherlin had some effect as the following typical item from the Danville *Register* will show:¹⁹ "Passing along the road a few days ago," said this reporter, "we saw a solitary negro man planting corn in the field, and a white man sitting on the fence looking at him.—Now that fellow, we reckon, didn't hear the thunder and is not waked up yet. He must have found some high spot which the waters did not reach during the late deluge! Why didn't the man get off the fence and go and carry a row alongside the Negro, and thus double the crop."²⁰

On May 9, 1866, the editor of the *Enquirer*, thinking along the same line, said: "In the poverty which has befallen us, it is essential that all go to work, and in earnest. We so nearly forgot how to work in the easy times of the ante-war era, that we need to take lessons from the examples of our fathers. We must learn from the simple habits of the generation that rose early and toiled late, and practiced the rules of economy and thrift. It is a curious matter of reflection to call to mind the progress which indolence has made even among men of business. Formerly the labor of a position was expected to be performed by its incumbent. Now every such man must have his assistant or deputy to do the work, while he himself maintains the dignity of the position. The consequence is, the work is badly done, at double the just expense. Men do so dislike to obey the apostolic injunction of *laboring with their own hands*, that they will avoid it if they can. They devote themselves accordingly to the arts of exploitation, as George Fitzhugh, the Virginia Philosopher, calls those devices by which one man contrives to get the main benefit of another man's toil."

Expressing himself further, the editor said: "The majority of the Southern community have already learned the lessons of their position. They are diligently at work . . . while others are occupied with vain lamentations and wailing to be taken up just where they were put down by a return of the old times and the old condition of things, which will never return again. . . . The man who can do nothing except what

¹⁹ *Enquirer*, Nov. 24, 1866.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 22, 1867.

is very danty, and at fancy wages, and who takes a ten cent segar from his lips to tell how poor he is, and that his family are without bread, is one who is likely to die out during the present stringency like winter killed wheat.”²¹

In spite of these good intentions and suggestions, however, much trouble followed. The people could not easily become readjusted without serious difficulty and terrible misery. In the first place, the atmosphere was noisy.²² The Negro was loud in his clamor for the rights attaching to his new status; the whites were still louder in their claims that the Negro must be kept in his place and by all means should be barred from participation in politics. Where the Negro would not submit to being “managed” by the white man he was usually roughly handled and there were lawless whites willing to participate in the performance. Law and order tended to break down. Stealing, fisticuffs, shooting, and murder became common and tended to make matters more difficult for those interested in economic reconstruction.²³

The hostility the white bore toward the Union, they manifested also in relations with the freedmen. The Virginians accepted emancipation with reluctance in so far as it divested them of the control of their former slaves. Yet they rejoiced that they were no longer required to maintain the non-producers among the Negroes. Those who were glad that slavery was dead wished to be rid also of the Negroes. Plans were formulated to bring white laborers and coolies in to replace the blacks. Few seemed to regard with tolerance the elevation of the Negroes to freedom and manhood; and only a minority of the enlightened classes spoke of the Negroes without passion. Referring to the change of attitude before the Reconstruction Committee, John B. Baldwin, ex-Confederate and Speaker of the then Virginia House of Delegates, said: “I do not like the negro as well free as I did as a slave, for the reason that there is now between us an antagonism of interest to some extent, while, before, his interest and mine were identical. Then, I was always thinking of how I could

²¹ *Enquirer*, May 9, 1866.

²² *Nation*, I, 76; *Times*, Nov. 6, 1865; *Enquirer*, July 25, Aug. 2, 1866.

²³ *Ibid.*, Aug. 7, 15, Oct. 9, 1868; May 15, 1869.

fix him comfortably. Now, I find myself driving a hard bargain with him for wages; and I find that sort of feeling suggested directly by motives of interest coming in between the employer and the employed.”²⁴

In the important social relations between the races, the hostility of the whites was extremely pronounced. It became the policy of the whites to deny to the Negro the rights and privileges of free men. Writing from this standpoint, the *Richmond Times*, an influential exponent of public opinion in Virginia, expressed the view that the Negro should not be allowed political and social equality with the white man. The freedman should be regarded as merely a free Negro. He should be permitted to earn his living, if allowed to remain in Virginia; but he must be expelled from the State if he should refuse to work. Should the Negro work, the community would be compelled from the point of view of sound policy as well as of humanity to encourage him by paying fair wages, and by fostering his moral and educational improvement. The Negro should be made the ward of the white man, protected by laws made expressly for him; but under no circumstances should he be given the ballot, or permitted to exercise the white man's rights.²⁵

The general acquiescence in this policy led the whites to commit acts of aggression against the freedmen. This attitude was manifested early in the opposition to schools for Negroes. In some localities, Northern white teachers were threatened, treated with contempt, and refused quarters for their schools or for their personal occupation, in order to prohibit the instruction of the Negroes. In Warrenton, the whites attempted to destroy the school for Negroes, and similar incidents occurred in other localities where the sentiment was hostile to the education of the freedmen.²⁶ The

²⁴ Testimony of John B. Baldwin before the Reconstruction Committee. Report, 109. For accounts of efforts to replace Negro labor see reports of schemes to induce immigration into Virginia, 1865-1867; immigration bills passed in the Legislature of 1865-1866; and recommendations of the press that Negroes go to Liberia, 1865-1867.

²⁵ *Richmond Times*, June 21, 1865.

²⁶ *American Missionary*, January 1866; *Richmond Times*, April 30, 1866; *Freedmen's Record*, April 1866, 63; *Reports of Freedmen's Bureau—Assistant*

"Yankee schoolmarms" were considered just as detestable as the "carpet-baggers."

The same attitude led to attacks on churches of the freedmen in the cities. In Richmond the Second African Church was reported burned by incendiarists in protest against the proposed Emancipation Day celebration of the freedmen in 1866.²⁷ Some time later, the public press reported that an unknown person fired into the Broad Street Church in the midst of services, causing great excitement but without injuring the worshippers.²⁸ In Petersburg, where incendiarists were especially active, they set fire to a large building on Union Street used as a church and school. On the same night, they forcibly entered the "large unfinished Negro church on Harrison Street" and "made every arrangement to secure its destruction." This church was completely destroyed, but the firemen managed to save the Union Street building.²⁹

Some of these outrages, however, met with the disapproval of the community, if the Petersburg *Index* reflected public opinion. According to that journal, nothing had ever transpired in Petersburg which had so profoundly agitated and incensed her people. "From every quarter and from all classes," said the editor, "we have heard an unbroken comment of regret and indignation that there could have been found within the limits of Petersburg one heart so profligate and abandoned as to inflict this outrage on our colored people, and there is a disposition equally wide-spread to take every possible means to hunt down the author or authors of the crime, and at the same time extend whatever assistance may be in our power to those who suffered this outrage."³⁰

The freedmen, moreover, angered the native whites by making a stand for freedom. Negroes ordered by whites "to get out of their way" would not do so.³¹ "It has become an act of great condescension on the part of some of these burly

Commissioner for Virginia, 1865-1866; Testimony of General A. H. Terry before the Reconstruction Committee, 143.

²⁷ *Freedmen's Record*, May 1866.

²⁸ *Richmond Times*.

²⁹ *Enquirer*, May 2, 1866.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, May 2, 1866.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 10, 1867.

blackamoors to allow 'white trash' any portion of the side walk,"³² said the *Enquirer*, exaggerating a case in which the Negro actually insisted on only a part of the sidewalk in Richmond. This, they said, was insolence, and impudence "fostered" by the teachings of the Yankees.³³

Carrying this exaggeration still further, the *Enquirer* said on July 7, 1866: "The combined teaching of the Freedmen's Bureau and Yankee schoolmarms, and the impunity which has hitherto attended the disgraceful riots and murders which are making our city hell, seem to have deprived the Negroes of the little sense they formerly possessed, and we are daily compelled to chronicle some new outrage against law and order, some high-handed act of insubordination on the part of the Negro population. On yesterday four aristocratic darkies, fancying themselves independent of the laws that trammel 'poor white trash,' got up an incipient riot which promised to result seriously, when their scheme was nipped in the bud by the police, who arrested the quartette."³⁴

The disorderly element was all but wildly inflamed by such exaggerations as this item displayed as *INSOLENCE OF A NEGRO*: "An instance of the most unprovoked and unmitigated insolence, came under our notice yesterday. A young lady while crossing Broad, at its junction with Sixth, was jostled in a most rude and unnecessary manner, by a big black rascal, whose very countenance indicated an evil disposition. She turned and in a manner remarkably mild under the circumstances, said, 'I wish you would take care.' 'You take care yourself,' was the ebony scoundrel's only response. A gentleman crossing insisted upon inflicting summary punishment for such insolence, but at the earnest entreaty of the young lady, desisted."³⁵

Knowing too that the law guaranteed them protection, Negroes expected too much from this quarter. Brought into the Hustings Court of Richmond, and sentenced for larceny, a Negro culprit incurred a second penalty for contempt when

³² *Enquirer*, July 23, 1866.

³³ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1866; July 30, 1868.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1866.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, March 18, 1868.

he said that in view of the fact that the court had changed hands he thought it would take better care of a colored man.³⁶ Negroes, too, fought back when assaulted and some of them became aggressive in attacking whites.³⁷ When arrested, moreover, Negroes sometimes expected their friends and relatives to interfere in their behalf. On several occasions, according to reports, they actually prevented policemen in Richmond from maintaining their arrests.³⁸ These few instances, however, did not show an actual tendency among the freedmen but rather self-defense carried to the extreme.

In most of these cases of inter-racial clashes, moreover, the whites were the aggressors. There is nothing on record to show a general disposition of the Negroes to attack the whites without cause. Referring to this a correspondent of *The Nation* wrote in 1865: "So much has been said of late about the lofty hopes which the emancipated slave entertains in reference to his future, of the insolence of his demeanor, of the certainty that in his hands freedom will become license, that I have looked with care to find indications of these things. So far as concerns the negro's manners, it seems to me that he has by no means removed all traces of his former servility of demeanor. My observation has, of course, been confined within narrow limits of time and space, but as far as I have seen, in the hotels, at barber shops, in public conveyances, in the streets, the colored people appear good-natured, well behaved, and certainly far more respectful and deferential than one ever expects to find white Americans. At Norfolk and Portsmouth, towns where, a short time previous to my visit and a short time after, whites and blacks were engaged in savage party fights, I met some negroes who might be classed as exceptions to this general description; but even in those towns, though there was little visible good humor, there was no insolence. How long the deportment of the blacks will retain the characteristic marks of their servitude, and how long a time will elapse before white people cease to be more angry at a negro's

³⁶ *Enquirer*, May 15, 1868.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1866; May 10, Sept. 5, Oct. 2, 1867; May 28, Dec. 23, 1868.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Nov. 23, 1866; Jan. 4, 7, Feb. 11, May 13, 1867; July 11, 1867; Jan. 8, June 24, 1869.

impudence than at a white man's, are questions only to be decided by future experience."³⁹

The whites attributed the attacks on Negroes to the antipathy of the lower classes, but the records show that the aristocratic Virginians were guilty of similar offences. The racial clashes resulted largely from the unwillingness of the whites to "accept the new situation." Many conflicts arose between employers and employees. As a rule, an expression of independence on the part of the laborer might result in his punishment even to the extent of death. Endeavoring to deal with the Negro as they had always done by kicking and cuffing them around, the whites unexpectedly met with a resistance which sometimes culminated in serious trouble. Such clashes the press often reported as "Negro Riots," or in some such incendiary fashion; but these organs at the same time bring out the very nature of the trouble. According to the *Enquirer* on May 2, 1866, "One Lehman, a white man, struck Robert Carter, a negro, because when refusing to respond to Lehman's request to lift a barrel, Carter replied, 'No, you white people think you can order black people around as you please.'"⁴⁰ On July 16, 1866, the *Enquirer* carried in a conspicuous place as an *OUTRAGE* the imprisonment of James R. Anderson by one of the agents of the Freedmen's Bureau, because Anderson had chastised one of his domestics.⁴¹

This practice of using force to compel Negroes to do things continued. According to the *Dispatch* of June 8, 1872, William Davidson, Superintendent of a tobacco factory in Petersburg, Virginia, was arraigned for whipping a Negro boy because he had neglected his work; and the judge dismissed the case.⁴² On July 6, 1872, the *Dispatch* reported that a Negro was beaten senseless by a white man because, while unloading some wire, he unexpectedly scared the horse of the latter and would not willingly receive the censure of this white man without talking back.

³⁹ *The Nation*, I, 137.

⁴⁰ *Enquirer*, May 2, 1866.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1866.

⁴² *Dispatch*, June 8, 1872.

It was a case of "Shut up, or I'll kill you" and there were cases of actual killing of Negroes, for which the whites were not punished by the courts.⁴³ E. H. Johnson, a Virginia clergyman, killed a Negro soldier in 1865. According to the *Enquirer* on November 3, 1866, "J. C. Johnston a law student of Lexington charged with killing a freedman was acquitted."⁴⁴ For a trivial reason one Queensbury, a planter in Louisa County, killed a Negro in his employ.⁴⁵ Because of slight misunderstandings, R. N. Eastham of Rappahannock and Washington Alsworth of Lunenburg killed Negroes in their service.⁴⁶ On November 24, 1866, the *Enquirer* reported that Dr. James Watson, "one of the most respectable gentlemen of Rockbridge county," killed a Negro for driving into his vehicle.⁴⁷

It appears, too, that although individual attacks of whites on Negroes commonly occurred, the whites did not as a rule resort to organized mob violence. Nevertheless, some instances of the sort occurred. Thus, in Norfolk the Negroes and Federal soldiers clashed in 1865.⁴⁸ Such frays took place between white and Negro boys at the Rocketts in Richmond and at Alexandria.⁴⁹ The early riot most disastrous to the Negroes, however, occurred in Alexandria on Christmas day of 1865. Writing of this affair, the *Richmond Sentinel* said: "The negroes with fife and drum, and headed by a negro armed with a spencer rifle, paraded the streets in the morning, in a manner which was understood by the whites as a bravado and defiance. Many of the young men were extremely excited by this circumstance, and some others connected with it, and about 3 o'clock the fighting commenced, and from that time until night the streets resounded with the explosion of fire arms."⁵⁰ After the military forces had restored order, it was reported that two white men had been injured and fourteen Negroes killed.

⁵⁰ Quoted in the *Norfolk Day Book*, December 28, 1865.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, July 6, 1872.

⁴⁴ *Enquirer*, Nov. 3, 1866.

⁴⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, Nov. 4, 1865.

⁴⁶ *Times*, July 24, 1866.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1866.

⁴⁸ *Times*, June 29, July 7, 1865.

⁴⁹ *Enquirer*, May 17, 1866.

Rarely were the Negroes the aggressors in these outbreaks, as comments on their conduct attest. Referring to their behavior, Whitelaw Reid said the Negroes "were everywhere found quiet, respectful and peaceable; they were the only class at work; and, in, perhaps, most respects their outward conduct was that of excellent citizens."⁵¹ With regard to their deportment, the *Alexandria Gazette* expressed the consensus of press opinion that "the negroes generally behave themselves respectfully toward the whites."⁵²

⁵¹ Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*, 302-303.

⁵² *Alexandria Gazette*, January 3, 1866.

CHAPTER V

THE MIGRATION

Because of the new freedom which the Negroes enjoyed after the Civil War and the inability of the whites to assign them a place and keep them there in spite of the new rights in which they were protected by the Federal Government, there developed a situation which the native whites believed would work the destruction of the whole State. In the first place, the Negroes did the natural thing in leaving the plantations where they had been held as slaves, just as prisoners when told that their terms had expired would leave the place of their incarceration even if assured that they could obtain food and shelter there by remaining on slightly changed terms. All of them did not leave the plantations, however, but a sufficient number to dislocate the labor supply to the extent that a crisis followed.¹ The number of laborers available, too, was decidedly diminished by the disinclination on the part of the Negro husbands to permit their wives and daughters to engage in any sort of employment for the whites. Considerable numbers of Negroes, like a smaller number of whites,² moreover, migrated to other States and some few abroad.

Having already had their race hate intensified by fears of the rise of the Negro to a commanding position in the economic world and the political sphere, some native whites of limited foresight, unlike the editor of the *Times*,³ rejoiced in the prospect of getting rid of the freedmen by their migration. Others thought that the end would be reached through their decimation from poverty and disease. On October 29, 1866, a Wytheville spokesman of this class said in the *Enquirer*: "We are pleased to learn that upwards of one hundred negroes have left the lower end of this county

¹ *Enquirer*, Jan. 11, 1866; Jan. 4, 15, 22, Feb. 15, 22, Nov. 11, 1867.

² *Ibid.*, April 8, Dec. 19, 1867; Feb. 12, 1869.

³ *Times*, Jan. 7, 1867.

within a few days, on their way to Ohio or some other Yankee State, which will suit them better—and where the whites and negroes are more nearly on equality. We would hail the day that would take the last descendant of the Hamites from our county.”⁴

Going into the matter with some detail the editor of the *Enquirer*, voicing the sentiments of a goodly number of whites, said of the Negro: “He can do as much coarse work as the white man, but his employer knows not what day or hour he may break off from him. His human nature is not our human nature, and he is, therefore, not amenable to the laws of political economy, as deduced from the observations of the phenomena of the human nature of white men, when entrusted with liberty, and left free to act each man for himself subject only to the requirements of conventionalism, and to the laws of free competition and of demand and supply. Honesty, punctuality, industry and intelligence are always in demand in the labor market, and white men cultivate those qualities in order to supply the demand and profit thereby. While remembering the differences between the white and colored races, we must not, however, forget that the Negro is capable of much improvement by employing the proper means. Education, moral, religious and mental, will make him a better man, a better laborer, and a more useful member of society. Let us, therefore, do all in our power to ameliorate his moral and intellectual nature, and to imbue him with a sense of pure and enlightened Christianity.”⁵

Referring later to the same situation this editor said: “The problem of the freedman is a compound one. It has its economic aspect and its political aspect. To look at the question simply in its economic business aspect, the negro population is desirable to the South. We want laborers, and they are laborers. They understand our crops and our cropping. Hence, Northern writers who shut their eyes to other considerations, exclaim against us as foolish, if we indicate a desire to be rid of the negroes in whole or in part. But the question is greatly modified and changed, when we

⁴ *Enquirer*, Oct. 29, 1866.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 10, 1866.

give due weight to the political aspect. The value of the freedmen as laborers, is greatly diminished by the political interference. The negro cares less about working, when in the destitution produced by idleness, he is fed with governmental alms. He cares not to secure friends by good conduct, or to comply with his engagements, when he has partisan champions for his judges. To become a criminal is to become a sort of hero and he rather rejoices in the notoriety. Nor is it permitted to our law to subject him to wholesome police. Either there is direct military or other interference which but stimulates the evil the law was designed to correct, or at best, even the wisest regulations are made the occasion of studied misrepresentation in order to feed the sentiment of hostility against us at the North. In this latter and wider view, the presence of the negroes here, gives to the Revolutionists their capital, prolongs our exclusion from our political rights, and multiplies the indignities and outrages of which we are the subjects. Here, then we have two sets of considerations—one which bids us keep the negro, the other to wish him away. The two may be harmonized by a sort of middle course. With the negroes living as a body in the South, they will become more and more worthless as laborers, and we will never have our political rights, or witness national peace. But diffuse them as repeatedly advocated in this journal and as recommended by Governor Worth of North Carolina. Send a portion of them North, East and West, so that all sections may have a share and the problem will be finally solved.”⁶

This feeling is further reflected in the following comment from the *Norfolk Journal* appearing in the *Enquirer* of August 22, 1867, which said: “On all sides we hear complaints about the dishonesty and inefficiency of servants. There is also a great demand for white ones. Most of those now seeking employment among us are very worthless while they expect high wages and great privileges in return for indifferent services. Thousands of Irish girls in the North are out of work, and the constant influx of immigrants only swells the number of the sufferers. Why will not some of these come

⁶ *Enquirer*, Dec. 12, 1866.

down here? Even if wages are not so high as in New York, the expense of living is by no means so great, and they would enjoy other advantages fully equal to what they can hope for anywhere else. We are tired of the wearying annoyances attending frequent change of servants. Let us do all in our power to encourage immigration and then our troubles in this respect will be greatly alleviated, if they will not entirely cease.”⁷

And, to be sure, a good many Negroes took the whites at their word, leaving the State in considerable numbers. This movement closely connected with the intra-State migration from the farms to the cities, but continued after the latter had practically ceased. The exodus commenced during the War, and rapidly increased after emancipation until the peak was reached in 1870. Thereafter, it diminished in the next few years. Early reports of the movement, however, rarely estimated the number of migrants. In November 1865, the *Norfolk Day Book* expressed regret that “large numbers” of the laboring population were leaving the State.⁸ The Freedmen’s Bureau reported “a marked diminution” in the Negro population of Virginia.⁹ In 1867, the *New York Evening Post* stated that the returns of the commissioners of revenue to the State Auditor of Virginia indicated a loss of 200,000 Negroes since 1860. The journal remarked that in some counties of Virginia the number of laborers had been “reduced fully one-half, and throughout the State the negroes have noticeably thinned out.”¹⁰

The direction in which these Negroes went in leaving the State and the way in which this migration was worked out will doubtless be interesting. It was said that the Freedmen’s Bureau was largely responsible for the going of numbers of Negroes from the vicinity of Norfolk and Fortress Monroe to points in the North, especially to Boston.¹¹ Prior to the

⁷ *Enquirer*, Aug. 22, 1867.

⁸ *Norfolk Day Book*, Nov. 16, 1865.

⁹ Quoted in the *Richmond Times*, Jan. 7, 1866.

¹⁰ Quoted in the *Enquirer*, April 18, 1867. See also Littell’s *Living Age*, April–June, 1867, 255.

¹¹ *Enquirer*, June 26, July 20, Aug. 2, Sept. 21, 1866; Mar. 11, April 26, 1867.

War the Negro servant was not so very popular in some of the Northern cities but because of the insolence and impudence of the Irish laborers there employed, the Negro laborer became more popular.¹²

Referring to this, the *Enquirer* of April 26, 1867, reports the New York *Times* as having said: "The Freedman's Bureau is doing a good thing in procuring Northern situations for those Negroes who have been trained as cooks, waiters, and domestic servants. Some fifty colored people are mentioned as having been shipped from Fortress Monroe to Boston where they have positions awaiting them in hotels, private families, etc. These form one of the best classes of house servants and are rapidly growing in appreciation at the North, which generally is tyrannized over by domestic despots from over the seas."¹³

Referring to this tendency, W. H. Dixon wrote in 1867: "Six years ago, as I am told, no lady in Boston, in New York, in Philadelphia, could bear to have a negro servant near her; a black man drank and stank; he was a cheat, a liar, a sot, a thief. I do not find this feeling wholly gone; here and there it may linger for many years; but it is greatly changed; and I have heard very dainty ladies in Boston and New York, express a liking for the negro as a household help. He is neat and willing; quick with his hand; good-humoured, grateful. Some of his race are handsome, with the grace and style which are held the signs of blood."¹⁴

Taking up the situation the *Dispatch* of September 19, 1872, said: "Not a steamer leaves this city for New York nor a train of cars from the North but some of them are not on board as emigrants. It has rendered good servants extremely scarce. It disproves completely the theory that the negro cannot live in any climate the white man can. The shipment of colored servants to Canada has been larger than to any Northern state. There are no isothermal limits for the African race within the United States. Virginia will, ere

¹² *Enquirer*, June 26, Aug. 2, Sept. 21, 1866; *Dispatch*, May 14, Sept. 27, 1872; Feb. 26, 1876.

¹³ *Enquirer*, April 26, 1867.

¹⁴ W. H. Dixon, *New America*, II, 327-328.

many years, be a state for white labor, and negroes will be as scarce as they are in Delaware."¹⁵

These Negroes not only went North from the sea-port towns but from inland towns and cities to which many of such migrants came first from the rural districts around these urban communities.¹⁶ As to the Negroes going abroad there were various references from time to time. On June 7, 1866, the *Enquirer* reported that some Negroes from Fredericksburg sailed in a vessel from Aquia Creek to be colonized in Hayti.¹⁷ On October 6, 1866, the *Enquirer* reported that Rev. H. W. Erskine, a colored man, who had resided in Liberia for over thirty years, delivered a lecture at Dudley Hall in Lynchburg to convince the Negroes of the expediency and the duty of going to Africa. It seemed that he made an impression. By request the lecture was repeated. Not very many Negroes went from Lynchburg to Liberia, however, because of the discouraging reports which certain colonists returning from that country brought back.¹⁸ Later, there was circulated among the Negroes in Virginia a pamphlet inviting them to establish a colony in Santo Domingo, the "Paradise of Africans."¹⁹ Although urged by those desirous of getting rid of the freedmen in that way, not many of the race sought that foreign port. In 1878 it was reported that as many as 250 Negroes were scheduled to work on a railroad in Brazil.²⁰ This doubtless had some connection with the whites who went to that country to escape the reconstruction.

Yet, strange as it may seem, most of these Negroes migrated to the agricultural South. On February 6, 1867, the *Alexandria Gazette* reported that "several persons had been there to induce negroes to go West and Southwest to labor for \$12.00 a month, board, three suits of clothes and a garden but they would not go."²¹ On February 15, 1867, the *Enquirer* said that "according to the Lynchburg News

¹⁵ *Dispatch*, Sept. 19, 1872.

¹⁶ *Dispatch*, May 24, 1872; September 22, 1872.

¹⁷ *Enquirer*, June 7, 1866.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 6, 1866; March 18, 19, 1868.

¹⁹ *Dispatch*, February 13, 1873.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 6, 1878.

²¹ *Enquirer*, February 6, 1867.

fifty-eight freedmen, hired in this city to work on a plantation in Louisiana, left in charge of Mr. J. W. Bondurant. One hundred were to go but forty-two failed to come at the appointed time.”²² On October 31, 1866, we learn that “a company of about fifty negroes left Lynchburg Saturday evening, by the Tennessee cars, having been employed to work on a cotton plantation in Mississippi.”²³ According to the *Enquirer* of March 11 and 12, 1867, forty Negroes left Norfolk that month for Arkansas where they were to cultivate cotton for \$18.00 a month and rations, their traveling expenses being paid.²⁴ Some Virginia Negroes went into Tennessee²⁵ but a large number went farther South and Southwest to work on the plantations where there were available better salaries than in Virginia.²⁶

The freedmen migrated from all parts of the State, but the exodus from some sections exceeded that from others. The Negroes migrated principally from the counties in which the slave population had been most densely settled. They left the war-congested areas of southeastern Virginia, and quotas from Richmond, Norfolk, Lynchburg, Petersburg and other cities added volume to the movement. These migrants, moreover, moved in different directions. A large proportion went to the South and Southwest; a considerable number moved directly into the East; not a few migrated to the West; and a sprinkling of freedmen went abroad to Liberia for the purpose of working out their destiny independently of the white man.²⁷

The displacement of the Negro population as shown by the census of 1870 is evidence of this redistribution of the Negro population although the Virginia Negroes did not go into some of these States in the proportion in which they went from others. On September 19, 1872, the *Dispatch* pointed

²² *Enquirer*, February 15, 1867.

²³ *Ibid.*, October 31, 1866.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 11 and 12, 1867.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1867.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, March 11 and 12, 1867; February 19, 1869.

²⁷ *Richmond Times*, June 26, 1866; *Richmond Enquirer*, June 26, August 2, October 29, 1860; also July 6 and October 6, 1866, for accounts taken from the *Virginian* and the *Republican*, respectively, of Lynchburg. *Richmond Whig*, January 4, 5, 7, March 23, 25, 28, April 8, 1870.

out that the Virginia Negro population decreased from 548,938 in 1860 to 548,907 in 1870, a loss of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It was also pointed out, moreover, that during this decade Florida gained in Negro population 46 per cent, Texas 38, Arkansas 9, North Carolina 8, Mississippi $1\frac{1}{2}$, Georgia 17, Tennessee 14, Alabama 9, South Carolina $\frac{3}{4}$. Some few Negroes also went into the Northwest. Iowa increased its Negro population during this decade 436 per cent, Illinois 270, Indiana 115, Michigan 74, Ohio 73, Massachusetts 45, New Jersey 21, Pennsylvania 15, and New York 6. These large percentages for the Northern States mean little here, inasmuch as there were few Negroes in those parts before this migration. The Negroes had gone largely South and East.

"The decrease in Virginia," said Somers, however, "is believed to be chiefly in negroes, who were accustomed under the slave system to be sent South in considerable numbers, and who have migrated in the same direction voluntarily since their emancipation. Contractors, themselves coloured men, also come down from the hotels in Boston and other Northern towns, and engage negroes to go to them as servants. But the tendency of the black man is to go South, and the probability is that Virginia will continue to supply the Southern plantations with less or more labour."²⁸

Referring to the movement in 1870, moreover, the *Whig* expressed the opinion that 10,000 Negroes had migrated southward during the preceding year.²⁹ In 1870 the New Orleans *Times* circulated a report, based upon official accounts of the railroads at Chattanooga, that 31,000 Negroes from the Carolinas and Virginia had passed through that city for the Southwest.³⁰ Later in the same year, the *Whig* made a report, supported by the statement of a Richmond railroad official, that 15,000 Negroes had then recently left Virginia, over the Danville, the Southside and the Virginia and Tennessee railroads.³¹ These various reports, however, lack con-

²⁸ Somers, *The Southern States Since the War*, 19.

²⁹ *Whig*, Jan. 6, 1870.

³⁰ *Whig*, March 22, 1870.

³¹ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1870.

clusiveness, but they suggest the volume of the migration during the decade.

A somewhat valuable index of the movement is the United States Census of 1870. Besides disclosing an actual decrease below the Negro population of 1860, this report shows that there lived in twenty selected States a total of 173,754 Negroes born in Virginia. In the absence of satisfactory evidence, it is impossible to state how many inhabited these States prior to 1860. In the Southern States, probably, the number was large; but the majority, no doubt, migrated to other States later than 1860. Therefore, the census report for 1870 is an index to the limits, if not the precise volume, of the movement. In this connection, the following tables show the number of Virginia Negroes domiciled in each selected State in 1870.^{31a}

VIRGINIA NEGROES IN OTHER STATES

Northern States		Western States		Southern States	
Connecticut.....	754	Illinois.....	2,074	Alabama....	24,223
District of Columbia.....	16,785	Indiana.....	1,106	Arkansas...	6,868
Maryland.....	5,624	Iowa.....	506	Georgia.....	14,642
Massachusetts.....	2,313	Kansas.....	1,142	Louisiana...	27,673
New Jersey.....	1,427	Michigan...	1,193	Mississippi..	27,713
New York.....	3,458	Ohio.....	13,889	Texas.....	13,683
Pennsylvania.....	8,165				
Rhode Island.....	516				
Total.....	39,042	Total.....	19,910	Total.....	114,802

Without regard to the direction taken, the movement responded essentially to economic causes. It was in the main a movement from a highly exhausted, somewhat densely populated region where economic stress was acute, to an undeveloped region more sparsely populated, where the struggle for existence was not keen, and the demand for labor was brisk. The movement was based primarily upon the impoverishment of the agricultural lands of Virginia. In the large slave-holding counties the principal crop was tobacco, a plant noted for its soil-exhausting properties. Yet planters had been slow to introduce the rotation of crops,

^{31a} *United States Census Reports of 1870 Volume of Population*, Table VI, 333.

and they had commonly neglected to use proper or sufficient fertilizing agencies. But these difficulties did not seriously disturb planters prior to the war, for they readily found means by which to obtain money. The owners of large estates shifted the crops from one location to another, while to the less fortunate alternatives were open. They might migrate to the new productive lands of the Southwest, or they might produce slaves for sale to planters in the Gulf States.³²

The emancipation of the slaves radically changed the situation. Of course, the unproductive character of the lands continued unchanged; but the embarrassed planter was no longer able to sell a Negro in order to replenish his purse. Besides, the laborers required a compensation which the planters were either unwilling or unable to pay. Considered as a whole, these events brought many planters to financial ruin, and to some extent, impoverished practically all.

Notwithstanding the changed conditions, some planters did not readily break up large estates they could not cultivate. Yet much land was offered for sale at prices that attracted few purchasers.³³ In the wake of these events, there came several years of short cereal crops which, in connection with the impoverishment of planters, exerted an injurious effect upon the freedmen. The Negroes were restricted in the purchase of land because the whites sometimes refused to sell. Many, forced by wage-fixing combinations, worked for the inadequate pay of \$5 a month. Some found themselves in a state of extreme destitution.³⁴

While this unfortunate condition obtained, there was elsewhere a pressing demand for common labor. This came principally from the South and Southwest where the new impetus given to the production of cotton and sugar and the projected expansion of railroad systems brought about an unusual opportunity for the freedmen. The extent of the demand was reflected in the wages offered. In Louisiana, the

³² Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, I, 278-281.

³³ *Report of State Board of Immigration*, published in the *Enquirer*, January 23, 1867.

³⁴ Virginia press of 1865 and 1866; *Whig*, January 5 and September 13, 1870, and May 24, 1871. *Reports of Freedmen's Bureau—Assistant Commissioner for Virginia*, 1867.

sugar cane planters offered twenty dollars a month and accommodations as the regular compensation. In the "rolling season," they paid laborers forty dollars a month.³⁵ Throughout the South, the wages offered able-bodied male "cotton hands" ranged from eighteen to twenty-five dollars a month, and the planters provided shelter and rations.³⁶ At the same time, the wages paid railroad laborers ranged from \$1.50 to \$1.75 a day, and the contractors provided shelter. In addition, transportation was invariably advanced, and, in some instances, furnished free of charge.³⁷

The freedmen embraced the new opportunity. They met the demand for plantation labor in the cotton fields of Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas. They accepted employment on the sugar plantations of Louisiana. They became the most efficient railroad construction "hands" in Alabama, Georgia, Texas and West Tennessee. And, in fact, throughout the Southwest the migrant labor became an indispensable asset.³⁸

During this time, moreover, there arose a demand for labor in the West and the North. A demand for coal miners came from Indiana and Illinois where the wages ranged from 85 cents a ton in summer to 95 cents in winter.³⁹ West Virginia and Ohio contractors required railroad laborers whom they paid wages of \$1.50 or \$1.75 a day.⁴⁰ In New York, Brooklyn, Boston and Jersey City female domestics commanded from twelve to twenty dollars a month. In New York State and New Jersey farmers paid hands from eighteen to twenty dollars a month. In the tobacco factories of Brooklyn, "colored hands" received \$3.50 a hundred for making "long tens." This was fifty cents in advance of the highest wage paid for this work in Richmond. Likewise, other

³⁵ *Whig*, May 27, 1871.

³⁶ *Enquirer*, March 11, 1867; *Whig*, February 17, 1870.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1867.

³⁸ *Enquirer*, January 19 and April 22, 1869; July 6, 1877; *Whig*, October 30, November 9 and 23, 1869; January 6 and 8, February 26, 1870; July 31, 1871; January 18, 1873.

³⁹ *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, May 4, 1872. Statement of a correspondent of the *Cincinnati Commercial*.

Richmond establishments paid less than those in Northern cities, where the “blue-coated and brass-buttoned black retainers” received an average of twenty-five dollars a month and “perquisites without limit.”⁴¹ In consequence of these inducements, numbers of freedmen migrated to the North and the West.⁴²

The subjoined tables exhibit the statistics of railroad mileage, and of cotton and sugar cane production of some States into which the freedmen migrated.

TABLE I: STATISTICS OF RAILROAD MILEAGE⁴³

States	1860	1870	1880
Alabama.....	1,001.96	1,081	1,780.22
Arkansas.....	38.50	128	821.78
Georgia.....	1,404.22	1,652	2,432.87
Louisiana.....	334.75	375	521.90
Mississippi.....	872.30	990	1,118.99
Tennessee.....	1,197.92	1,451	1,816.17
Texas.....	306	583	2,696.64
West Virginia.....	—	387	691.56
Ohio.....	2,992.45	3,448	5,415.33

TABLE II: STATISTICS OF COTTON PRODUCTION⁴⁴

States	Unit	1860	1870	1880
Alabama.....	Bales	989,955	429,482	699,654
Arkansas.....	“	367,393	247,968	608,256
Georgia.....	“	701,840	473,934	814,441
Louisiana.....	“	777,738	350,832	508,569
Mississippi.....	“	1,202,507	564,938	963,111
Texas.....	“	431,463	350,628	805,284

TABLE III: STATISTICS OF SUGAR CANE PRODUCTION⁴⁵

States	Unit	1860	1870	1880
Louisiana.....	Hghds.	221,726	80,706	171,706
Texas.....	“	5,099	2,020	4,951

⁴¹ *Whig*, May 27, 1871.

⁴² *Enquirer*, June 26, August 2, October 29, 1866; May 4, 1872; January 28, 1873; *Times*, June 26, 1866; *Whig*, January 28, 1873; *Dispatch*, March 22, 1875.

⁴³ Compiled from *United States Census Reports: Volume of Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics*, 1860, 328–329; *Abstract of the Eleventh Census*, 1890, 218; H. V. Poor, *Manual of Railroads*, 1870–1871, xliii.

⁴⁴ Arranged from the *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 1880. Table XLIII. A bale weighs 400 pounds.

⁴⁵ Arranged from *Compendium of the Ninth Census*, 1870. Table XC; and the *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 1880. Table XLVI. A highd. weighs 1,000 pounds.

Although the economic advantages were sufficient to induce freedmen to migrate, some doubtless moved to the North and West under the stimuli of good schools and of social attractions from which they were excluded in Virginia. The public press, moreover, has suggested that political considerations influenced the migration to the South. From this standpoint, the *Whig* remarked that Virginia was no longer threatened by "Negro domination," but the great strength of the race lay in the Gulf States where the Negro had the best opportunity to control a State government.⁴⁶ Yet, it is unlikely that political aspirations influenced the Southern migration since the masses and not the leaders moved to the Gulf States. But the dominant economic character of the movement was attested on broader grounds. When the demand for labor in the South so declined as to diminish wages there, the volume of migration sharply diminished. And when the wages of the South and of Virginia tended to equalize, the press reported a surplus labor supply in the State.⁴⁷

Generally speaking, the movement exerted a threefold effect. On the communities to which the migrants went, the result was largely beneficial. Testimony was all but unanimous that the migrant labor was efficient. Referring to the migrant railroad laborers in West Virginia and Ohio, a correspondent of the *Cincinnati Commercial* wrote: "I am informed by the contractors that the negroes make the most faithful hands they can get."⁴⁸ In 1871, the *Whig* said: "While the exodus of colored females is increasing there is a growing influx from the North of English, German and Irish females seeking places as domestics. At the North there is undoubtedly a growing preference for colored servants over the whites."⁴⁹ Writing generally of the migration, the *Enquirer* said in 1877: "The invariable testimony North, West and South credits the black man as a more efficient and tractable laborer than the white man. Mining and milling companies

⁴⁶ *Whig*, October 30, 1869.

⁴⁷ *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 4, 1872.

⁴⁹ *Whig*, May 27, 1871.

and large farmers writing for laborers to the agency of J. P. Justis in this city, always make it a condition that no whites shall be sent."⁵⁰ In this connection, moreover, the public press of Virginia reported no serious labor troubles resulting from the migration to the North and West. Neither did it report any "offensive participation" in politics on the part of the Negroes who moved to the South.

From the standpoint of the migrants the movement was a success. Contemporaries agreed that the Negroes generally saved their money, and became stable citizens in the community. Referring to this aspect of the migration, the *Danville Times* stated that a good many families went among the migrants.⁵¹ Remarking upon the thrift of the migrants the *Whig* wrote in 1870: "The Christmas holidays brought many of them back on visits to their families, and all such will probably prove efficient emigration missionaries. Returning with their holiday outfits and supplies of money and full of the novelties of Southern plantation life, they will probably greatly increase the already existing inclination among the colored people of the State to move southward."⁵² In 1872, a correspondent of the *Cincinnati Commercial* said that some of the migrant Negroes gambled away their money or spent it for whiskey or oysters, but the general tendency was to save their money or send it home to their families.⁵³ On the contrary, there circulated reports of the destitute condition of migrants in the South. The press reported that planters and railroad contractors refused to pay the wages promised after the freedmen had migrated. Newspapers published accounts of interviews with "returned" Negroes who had "walked" back from Mississippi and Alabama.⁵⁴ Such reports, however, did not circulate until events had brought out the danger of the movement to Virginia interests.

The aristocracy had hoped to supplant the Negroes with migrant laborers from the North and with immigrants from

⁵⁰ *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877.

⁵¹ In the *Whig*, January 4, 1870.

⁵² *Whig*, January 6, 1870.

⁵³ *Enquirer*, May 4, 1872.

⁵⁴ *Whig*, Feb. 5, April 8, 1870.

abroad.⁵⁵ In editorial speeches and books written by friends of the lost cause during this transition period, it was boldly proclaimed that, inasmuch as the Negroes would not work and would never be a success as free laborers, the hope of the South was in European immigration. There was organized, then, a number of immigrant aid agencies and the agricultural societies in the State encouraged the movement in every way possible.⁵⁶ The State, moreover, even went so far as to establish a board through which a commissioner of immigration was to function.

This effort closely connected with one of the most important economic questions for Virginians at the close of the war, the disposition of surplus land. Under the slave-holding regime cheap labor was abundant and large areas could be cultivated without much attention to efficiency. Not much care was taken with the soil, for in the abundance of land, rotation of crops was not absolutely necessary. It was possible to work one parcel of land to death and move over to another sufficiently fertile to produce the required crop. Lacking sufficient "hands" to cultivate such large plantations after the War, however, the farmers deemed it necessary to sell a part of their estates and to retain just such acreage as they could cultivate under the changed circumstances. Yet, it required time to bring the rich planters to this position, for they desired to hold the lands intact to maintain the aristocracy of the old regime.⁵⁷ A large number of farms, however, were placed on the market as a result of sales for debts and arrears of taxes. Some were sold by the owners who, despairing of progress in the changed order of things, migrated to other parts.

As a result, therefore, one could hardly pick up a newspaper or appear in the presence of a Virginian without hearing about the selling of land. Robert Somers wrote in 1871, "I was not three minutes in Richmond till a pushing Irishman

⁵⁵ Leclercq, *Un Été en Amérique*, 123; *Enquirer*, June 22, 1866.

⁵⁶ *The Nation*, I, 109-110; George Rose, *The Great Country*, 159; *Enquirer*, Feb. 1, April 8, May 5, Nov. 1, 23, July 18, Oct. 6, 1867; Jan. 8, 29, April 11, 1868; May 7, 1869; Oct. 31, 1871; *Dispatch*, May 3, 1872.

⁵⁷ *Enquirer*, Nov. 21, 23, 1866.

offered to sell me a very fine milch cow and calf on the spot, or tell me where I could get a nice bit of land on very economical terms. But the stranger who is landward bound is not left to such chance means of information. There are dozens of respectable estate-agents, every one of whom has lists of farms and estates for sale which he advertises in the newspapers, and offers in fee-simple at a rate per acre that in England or Scotland, or even Ireland, would be deemed but a moderate annual rent, and payment of which he is willing to take in cash just enough to pay the expenses of the suit, with the balance in instalments spread over three or four years. Every one of them states in private that he has even more lands on his list for sale than he advertises."⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, too, a number of Poles, Germans, Englishmen, and other foreigners came to settle in Virginia and some Northerners purchased land and engaged in various pursuits in the State.⁵⁹ When such lands were offered for sale, however, the prices were so much higher than the lands were actually worth when compared with more valuable lands offered these same purchasers in the fertile sections of the country that Virginia lands did not sell so rapidly as desired.

Moreover, there were several handicaps to the large influx of white persons from these sources. In the first place, the heavy debt of the State and the probability of high taxes imposed on an impoverished people did not make things attractive. Furthermore, neither the State nor the citizens were in the position to give such financial aid and to offer these persons such inducements as could the undeveloped States of the Northwest.

The State Board of Immigration, moreover, turned out to be a farce. E. A. Pollard said: "Such a caricature has seldom been exhibited even in the South, since Mr. Meminger's plan of replenishing the Confederate treasury by church collections."⁶⁰ The act establishing the board stipulated that it

⁵⁸ Somers, *The Southern States Since the War*, 21.

⁵⁹ *Enquirer*, Aug. 17, Nov. 1, 22, 1866; Sept. 19, 1867; Jan. 8, 29, Feb. 10, 18, 24, Mar. 18, 28, April 11, 16, 24, Aug. 22, Dec. 23, 1868; Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 10, Mar. 31, May 17, 1869; *Dispatch*, Mar. 3, Oct. 31, 1871; April 26, 1872.

⁶⁰ *Old and New*, V, 284.

should not operate at the expense of the State. Voluntary contributions were to be the source of its revenue. "I succeeded," said Gen. Richardson, the president of the board, "in obtaining a loan of five hundred dollars, and by donation one hundred dollars; and the attempt being manifestly hopeless, was given up."⁶¹

Summing up the situation which in many respects was typical in most parts of the State hoping to attract immigrants, the correspondent of the *Dispatch* from Miller's, Essex, Virginia, September 30, 1872, said: "For seven long years we have in vain expected immigrants to come in swarms like locusts to Virginia, thereby enhancing the value of land a thousand fold and repaying us for the loss of our slaves. But what is the fact? Notwithstanding the exertions of land agents and immigration societies there is scarcely any demand, so far as we know, for Virginia lands east of the Blue Ridge, and there has been a constant and strong wave of emigration of the Negroes, who were heretofore almost the only cultivators of the soil, and who are still our main dependence for agricultural and domestic labor. Indeed those who remain are settling their families in squads upon a few acres, and find employment in chopping cord-wood, in tobacco factories, on railroads and elsewhere, which renders them and theirs independent of the farmer and his wife. Thus labor for the field and for the home is scarce, uncertain and high, agriculture unprofitable and land almost worthless to the owner."⁶²

As the migration increased in volume, however, the position of the promoters of the Negro migration rapidly became untenable. Contemporary opinion became all but unanimous that Virginian interests suffered as a result of the movement. This view was well expressed by the *Burkeville Times*. Referring to the migration, the journal said: "The blacks may not constitute the best labor in the world; but they constitute the best most of our people can get—and in fact, all that many of them can obtain." Asserting that "the welfare of the present generation of whites in Virginia is intimately blended with that of the black population," the journal

⁶¹ *Old and New*, V, 284.

⁶² *Dispatch*, Sept. 30, 1872.

expressed the opinion that "they cannot live together except to share a common prosperity or common adversity; and they cannot part from each other without serious, if not fatal injury to the whites." From the standpoint of common sense, then, the *Burkeville Times* urged that every effort should be employed to make the best use possible of "these indispensable agents of our own well-being," and that their interests should be made substantially the interests of the whites.⁶³

As early as 1869, detrimental effects of the migration to Virginia interests became apparent. They were exhibited in the relations between employers and laborers. The supply of efficient laborers had been greatly reduced.⁶⁴ The local demand for labor had brought about a general rise in the wage level. Farming interests had been exposed to unusual pressure because labor had been withdrawn therefrom for both the local railroad construction and the migration. Farm wages rose to ten dollars generally, although "hands" sometimes received from eight to twelve dollars.⁶⁵ Laborers engaged in railroad construction received wages ranging from \$1.75 to \$2 a day.⁶⁶ Female domestic servants, formerly paid six or eight dollars a month, commanded ten or twelve.⁶⁷ On the other hand, reports circulated that the number of public charges had increased as a result of the migration of men who ceased to support their dependents.⁶⁸

In addition to the obvious effects, the migration exerted a depressing influence upon the value of agricultural lands. The heavy migration from the Southside and Eastern Counties rendered impossible the cultivation of a large acreage. The resultant non-production caused the land to deteriorate in value. Thus land selling for ten dollars an acre before the War was sold under court decrees at prices ranging from three dollars down to one dollar.⁶⁹ As a result of this serious situa-

⁶³ *Richmond Whig*, October 29, 1869.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1870, comment of *Lynchburg Republican*; *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877; *Journal of the House of Delegates*, 1869-1870, 105, 181.

⁶⁵ *Whig*, May 4, 1871; *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, May 4, 1871.

⁶⁷ *Enquirer*, July 6, 1877.

⁶⁸ *Journal of House of Delegates*, 1869-1870, 105, 181, 202.

⁶⁹ *Whig*, January 10, 1870; January 14, 1871.

tion, the General Assembly enacted a measure prohibiting the sale of land under a court decree at a price lower than three-fourths of its assessed value.⁷⁰ But the official valuation of agricultural land was low. According to the official State assessment of 1870, farm lands in many counties had depreciated in value since the assessment of 1856. And the most marked depreciation occurred in the large former slaveholding counties of the Southside and the East from which the migration was heaviest.⁷¹

As a consequence of these disastrous effects on Virginia interests, movements originated to check the migration. The press published reports of the destitution and dissatisfaction of migrants who had gone to the South,⁷² and the *Culpeper Advance* warned freedmen not to migrate because of the susceptibility of the Negroes to "galloping" consumption. The journal represented that the disease, quickly contracted in the cotton and rice fields of the South, was immediately fatal.⁷³

Furthermore, official cognizance was taken of the migration in 1870.⁷⁴ On the 9th day of February, Thomas P. Jackson, alive to the situation, introduced in the House of Delegates this resolution: That in the opinion of this house, the suicidal policy of permitting the withdrawal from our State of the best class of agricultural laborers should be checked by necessary legislation; that we hear with regret of the distress of many who have been induced to seek employment in more Southern States, and look with alarm upon the heavy charges impending over our impoverished people for the maintenance of the helpless families of laborers who have already left the State."⁷⁵ Another resolution required the committee for courts of justice "to enquire into the expediency of enacting a law to prevent labor agents from inducing the

⁷⁰ *Acts*, 1869-1870, 426.

⁷¹ *Annual Reports* (1871), *Report of State Auditor*, Statements I and II. These show the real estate valuation in 1870, and compare the latter with that of 1856.

⁷² *Whig*, February 5, 1870, article from *Chatham Tribune*; April 8, 1870, article from *Lynchburg Republican*.

⁷³ Reported by a correspondent to the *Whig*, March 23, 1870.

⁷⁴ *Journal of House of Delegates*, 1869-1870, 105, 181, 202.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1869-1870, 105.

emigration of able-bodied men from the State, without making proper provision for the maintenance of their families, thereby increasing to an enormous extent, the paupers of the State.”⁷⁶

The resolutions were not enacted into law. Perhaps the General Assembly recognized that the peak of migration had been reached in 1870. Although the movement continued for several years, forces by that time had already commenced to check it considerably. The influx of laborers to the South had tended to equalize supply and demand. This brought about a gradual decline of the wage-level. In the meantime, the reduction of the labor supply had caused a sharp advance of the wage-level in Virginia. Thus wages in the South and in Virginia tended to equalize. Demand in the State was brisk. Migration gradually became less pronounced since the freedmen found increasing economic opportunities at home. In this manner the migration subsided to a normal movement sometime prior to 1875. There were some cases of the return of these migrants to Virginia after failing to find better wages elsewhere.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Journal of House of Delegates*, 1869-1870, 181.

⁷⁷ *Dispatch*, Jan. 2, 1875.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEGRO AT WORK

As only a fraction of the Negro population migrated, however, there resulted a tense situation. This was attested by the military orders issued concerning the freedmen. These orders generally prescribed rules and regulations for the conduct of the Negroes, prohibited them from leaving their accustomed labor to come to the cities, informed them that with their liberty they had acquired no individual rights in the property of the former masters, and stated their rights and duties as free laborers. Referring to these orders, the *Richmond Times* remarked on June 14, 1865: "The stern decrees of the military have driven many thousands of blacks from those cities, into which they swarmed from the first two or three weeks after the surrender of General Lee. The idle and vagabond portion of them have long since been driven off, and their dirty little stalls for the sale of cold coffee, hot lemonade and half-decayed fruit have been swept away by the *besom* of the lately rehabilitated mayor of this city."¹

The most drastic military regulation required the Negroes to show a pass authorizing them to go about city streets without molestation. This rule served to prevent further overcrowding of the cities, and to direct farm labor to the plantations. For the specific purpose it was a wholesome regulation, but used in connection with a measure applicable to Richmond, requiring Negroes to be off the streets by nine o'clock at night, it became a weapon of oppression offensive to respectable freedmen. The Richmond Negroes protested

¹ Some of these military orders were issued by General Hartsuff at Petersburg; General Duval at Staunton; General Halleck at Richmond; General Ludlow on the Peninsula; General Gregg at Lynchburg; and General Wright at Danville. An order issued by General Gordon at Norfolk urged the white people to give the Negroes employment, since many desired to remain where they had lived.—*Richmond Republic*, May 16, 1865.

Notices of these orders appear in the *Alexandria Gazette*, April 21, 1865; *Richmond Times*, May 8, 10, and June 12, 1865; *Richmond Republic*, May 15, 1865.

the rule in a letter published in the New York *Tribune*, and later they brought the matter to the attention of President Johnson. Speaking in behalf of the Richmond delegation bearing grievances to the President, the chairman said: "In the city of Richmond, the military and police authorities will not allow us to walk the streets day or night, in the regular pursuit of our business or on our way to church, without a pass, and passes do not in all cases protect us from arrest, abuse, violence and imprisonment."² Yet the rigorous execution of this stern order did much to direct labor where it was needed. This result, considered in connection with the fact that the vast majority of the freedmen remained on the farms,³ leads to the conclusion that labor, while abundant in some localities, but scarce in others, was generally an available commodity wherever it commanded a fair price.

The compensation offered the freedmen, however, was not generally attractive. The farmers had preconceived notions that free Negro labor would be inefficient, and they believed that the freedmen would not work without compulsion. Therefore, the farmers determined to settle the question of wages without reference to the needs of the Negroes, and without soliciting their opinion on the worth of their labor. The farmers held that they were impoverished and could not pay high wages. Most of them decided that five dollars a month should constitute the wages of an able-bodied male laborer, but the pay of women and boys should be smaller. They agreed not to employ a Negro who could not obtain the recommendation of his former master. In Roanoke County, the farmers agreed that laborers of special abilities might receive a special compensation, the amount to be determined by the former master.⁴ The farmers of Franklin County decided the laborers must be satisfied with small wages or go without work.⁵ In Buckingham county, the farmers agreed not to rent land to freedmen. They might permit the

² Quoted in the Richmond *Times*, June 19, 1865. See also the *Times* of May 29 and June 14, 1865.

³ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1865.

⁴ Richmond *Republic*, June 17, 1865.

⁵ *Nation*, I, 175.

freedmen to accept a share of the crop as their compensation, but the proprietor was required to retain "entire and exclusive control of the premises."⁶ In Albemarle county, the farmers required labor contracts in writing.⁷

The wage scale fixed by these combinations tended to control labor prices in those counties containing a large Negro population, but had little effect in counties where labor was scarce. Thus, in certain "Valley" counties, and in others from which able-bodied laborers had fled, it was reported that wages varied from nine dollars to twenty-five dollars a month.⁸ But such instances were exceptional, although the James River farmers drew up a set of regulations in which they agreed to pay "first class field hands" \$130 a year, or \$10 a month. Less competent laborers were to receive smaller pay, and a set of fines and penalties was established through which the laborer's actual money wages might be reduced to practically nothing.⁹

The repressive labor combination exerted a disastrous effect upon the freedmen. Compelled to work for inadequate wages, restricted in their freedom of employment, opposed in their ambition to obtain land in some quarters, the freedmen became disgruntled and restless. Some began to break their contracts; others refused to make agreements for the new year. Not a few clung to the vain delusion, stimulated by unfriendly advice, that the government would divide among the blacks the lands of the former masters. Thus the situation was fraught with difficulty. The public press characterized the freedmen as vagrants and vagabonds, unwilling to work without compulsion. It was stated that these people considered a contract a mere scrap of paper. The press urged the enactment of strict labor laws requiring the Negroes to respect contracts. The *Richmond Times* said that they

⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 6, 1865.

⁷ *Richmond Times*, June 14, 1865. See *Alexandria Gazette*, June 28, 1865, for the order of General Hartsuff prohibiting further meetings of planters, in the district of Nottoway, to regulate wages, and disapproving the regulations already made.

⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 11 and December 11, 1865.

⁹ *Norfolk Day Book*, January 11, 1866.

should be compelled to pursue "that species of simple healthy agricultural labor for which they are best suited."¹⁰

In the meantime, the Freedmen's Bureau rendered effective service in arousing the freedmen from a state of inaction. Some Negroes were induced to make contracts; others were persuaded to abide by agreements already made. The Negroes were told that they could acquire land only through purchasing it. The government, it was made clear, had no land to distribute among the freedmen. Agents urged the freedmen to become honest, industrious laborers, to educate their children, and to protect their families. In this way, it was pointed out, they could attain respectability and advance their own interests.¹¹

Evidences of improvement were shortly seen. In fact, contemporary testimony shows that large numbers of freedmen were industriously employed throughout the summer and fall of 1865. Referring to the labor situation, the *Norfolk Day Book* wrote on July 25, 1865: "Accounts from the interior bring us encouraging assurance that the crops of cereals are in the most promising condition." Remarking more specifically on Negro labor, the journal said: "We are also gratified to learn that in most sections, where the crops are promising, the colored people, under the new system of labor, have gone to work cheerfully and industriously and are entitled to much of the credit for these promising results."¹²

Speaking of the labor situation, Whitelaw Reid said the Negroes were as industrious as any other class of the population. "They were the only class at work."¹³ In much the same manner, the Negroes impressed Skinner, an English traveler. Stating that the Negroes have preferred honest labor to starvation, Skinner attributed to them the character of a free laboring population. He said, moreover: "I have

¹⁰ *Richmond Times*, August 5, 1865; November 9, 1865.

¹¹ Press references to labor conditions: *Alexandria Gazette*, December 11, 1865; January 3, 1866; *Norfolk Day Book*, August 1, 1865; *Richmond Times*, June 13 and 20, 1865; July 7, 1865. See *Times*, October 14, 1865, for efforts of the Bureau to get Negroes to make and keep contracts. The *Richmond* papers abound in references to the "idleness" of the Negroes in 1865 and 1866.

¹² *Norfolk Day Book*, July 25, 1865.

¹³ Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*, 302-303.

heard that negroes showed every disposition to contract for their labor, and that no fears need be entertained of general idleness and pauperism. Planters were anxious to have more hands for the coming season. Swedes, Germans, and Irishmen had been imported; but the Swedes refused to eat corn-bread, the Germans sloped away north-west-ward, in the hope of obtaining homesteads, and the Irishmen preferred a city career. It seems that the South will have need of Sambo yet awhile, until, perchance, he shall return whence his fathers came and swell the Liberian census.”¹⁴

An official view of the labor situation supports these conclusions. In a summary statement of the labor conditions in Virginia from June 15, 1865, to December 1, 1865, the Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau said: “The freedmen are laying aside their disposition to roam about and to seek the towns and camps. In Southeastern Virginia, they have shown remarkably their capacity to take care of themselves. Out of 70,000 gathered there in extreme destitution less than 4,500 are now receiving government aid, and about one-half of these are soldiers’ families.”¹⁵

If there is any truth in what David Thomas said of certain Virginia Negroes about this time, some of them must have been industrious. “The negroes are almost the only persons in Richmond who have ready money to spare,” said he, “for when the war broke out instead of purchasing Confederate bonds, they buried their gold and silver in secret places, and now the sight is not rare to see a negro woman having her person decorated with a rich lace shawl, purchased at a very reduced rate from a city belle, for the citizens are very wishful to be put in possession of hard cash, and will sell their valuables at a reduced rate to obtain it. In this city there are at present thirty different secret societies amongst the negroes, and all their funds are in gold and silver, but a friend of mine in whom the negroes have great confidence, recommended them to convert their gold into currency, as he believed that they would secure a saving of twenty per cent in a very little time. Whether they would consent to the

¹⁴ Skinner, *After the Storm*, II, 348-349.

¹⁵ *Nation* (January 18, 1866), II, 36.

proposal I cannot say, for they are very fond of gold and silver, and will sometimes prefer to bury their treasure rather than put it out to interest."¹⁶

A correspondent of *The Nation*, who had traveled in the State, could say in 1866: "I see that encouraging accounts of the industry of the freedmen are coming from all parts of the South. My experience in the South, both as a traveler, and as a resident and an employer of negroes, was such that I needed no reports of this sort to convince me that a negro fairly paid and otherwise justly dealt with, living under the same restraints of law which are found necessary for white men, is a satisfactory laborer."¹⁷

In this second year of the crisis, too, the editor of the *Enquirer* had to say: "Although the freedman has not generally worked as well as the slave, he has done better in Virginia, than foreign white labor. The first mistake should rather teach us caution, than lead us to adopt hastily the opposite conclusion that in the future the South must rely altogether on the freedman for farm labor. The former owner and the former slave understood each other. The freedman understands the mode of cultivation of the staple crops of the State; he was on the farm and without employment. It was wise to give him a trial. He is now doing pretty well; but one year does not settle the question. He may not do as well; or he may do still better in the future."¹⁸

There appeared also frequent accounts of the Negro returning to work. On April 17, 1867, came the report saying: "We learn that there are twenty-six hundred colored men in the vicinity of Kempsville, who are energetically at work. They are engaged in farming, cutting wood and timber, sawing lumber, and various other occupations, which must ultimately have a powerful influence in developing the latent resources of the county of Princess Anne. Our information from these men is to the effect that they are not only industrious, but are honest, sober and quiet, and are looking forward with much hope to a bountiful harvest."^{18a}

¹⁶ Thomas, *My American Tour*, 201-202.

¹⁷ *The Nation*, II, 493.

¹⁸ *Enquirer*, May 30, 1866.

^{18a} *Ibid.*, April 17, 1867.

In many cases of the refusal of Negroes to work the trouble was due to dereliction on the part of employers.^{18b} Macrae, who visited the State during this crisis, said: "I remember a Southern planter telling me that he had offered employment to more than a hundred idle negroes, but that not one of them would have it. I thought this a strong fact, but deemed it advisable to see what the negroes had to say to it. My inquiries proved that while the planter's statement was perfectly correct, as far as it went, it altogether omitted the explanation. The facts turned out to be these:—The planter had hired the negroes the previous year, bargaining to give them the value of half the amount of cotton they raised, deducting expenses. When the crop was sold the negroes came for their share. The planter told them that, unfortunately, owing to the fall in cotton, the crop had scarcely paid expenses, so there was nothing for them this year; but he hoped the next year would prove better.

"This might be a perfectly true statement of the case, but the negroes could not understand it. All they knew was, that they had worked for half the crop and had got nothing. Accordingly, when the planter offered to reëngage them next year on the same terms as before, they could not see it. But probably there are white labourers who could not have seen it either. One of the negroes whom I questioned on the subject said,—'I'm willin' to wu'k, sah, and I want to wu'k, 'cos I'm mighty ill off; but I won't engage to wu'k another year till I knows I'm gwine to get paid at the end of it.' It was the same with the others. It can scarcely be wondered at if compulsion would have been needed to make the negroes work under such circumstances as these.

"I made inquiries also amongst those whom I found swarming into cities and towns, instead of staying in the country where their labour was needed. I found that, while some had come to eat the bread of idleness, many had come for safety; others to get their children to school; others to seek for work that would be paid for.

"Even with reference to the worst class of cases—such as that of the man snoring in bed at noon, and others, in which

^{18b} *Enquirer*, June 11, 27, 1866; Jan. 4, 15, 22, Feb. 15, 22, Nov. 11, 1867.

remunerative work was to be had, and yet was not taken advantage of—two things need to be remembered. The first is, that slavery has to be credited with a share of the blame. It was part of the teaching of slavery that a gentleman was one who lived without working. Is it wonderful that some of the negroes, who want now to be gentlemen, should have thought of trying this as the easiest way? The second point is, that the negroes, in so far as idleness exists amongst them, are not exceptional people. On the contrary, I found more activity and more desire for work amongst the poor negroes than amongst the poor whites.

“I suppose it is natural for many, especially in a hot climate, to be idle when they can afford to be; and the question is, whether a black man, if he can afford it, has not just as much right to be idle as a white man has? Why should more love of work, for work’s sake, be expected of the black man than of the white man?”¹⁹

Somers said in 1870, moreover: “The testimony generally borne of the negroes is that they work readily when regularly paid. Wherever I have consulted an effective employer, whether in the manufacturing works of Richmond or on the farms and plantations, such is the opinion, with little variation, that has been given. In the country, negroes get from eight to ten dollars a month, with house and provisions. In Richmond, for common and ordinary labour, they are paid fifteen dollars a month with provisions, or thirty dollars and find themselves in the necessaries of life. In various branches of more or less skilled labour of which negroes are capable the wages are much higher, and approach the standard of remuneration to white men in the same occupations. A dollar a day for common labour will appear high to the best labourers in England or Scotland, but there is a necessary qualification to be made in any comparison of the relative rates of wages in the two countries.”²⁰

As time progressed, Negro farm labor improved notwithstanding reports to the contrary. The Richmond *Dispatch* of July 3, 1873, published an unfavorable report based upon a

¹⁹ Macrae, *Americans at Home*, II, 52–53.

²⁰ Somers, *The Southern States Since the War*, 17–18.

survey that journal had made of labor and crop prospects in the State. "The reports of our correspondents show that laborers for agricultural purposes are scarce in thirty counties," said the journal, "and in many others they are reported indifferent or unreliable, while still others report that though scarce the quality of the farm laborers is improving. We find them plentiful in only eleven counties, and in some of these they are rated as of very poor quality."²¹ Despite this unfavorable report, however, and notwithstanding that Negro labor produced most of the food and staple crops of Virginia,²² the *Dispatch* reported that the crops were uniformly good. Comparing these with the abundant crops of other years, the journal asserted that despite the ravages of the fly and of rust on the wheat crop, "this will probably be the largest wheat crop raised in Virginia since the war." Referring to the yield of corn, the *Dispatch* said: "the crop this year will be better than usual despite the depredations of worms and the rain." A favorable report was made of the prospective hay "yield," but little was said of tobacco except that an unusually large acreage had been planted in twenty-eight counties, and "a good stand had been obtained in twenty-five (other) counties." The journal reported truck farming "uniformly prosperous and promising."²³

About the same time, idleness among the whites, it was reported, had attained alarming proportions. Reviewing the labor situation, the *Richmond Whig* said that "every city

²¹ *Dispatch*, July 3, 1873.

²² *American Missionary*, January 13, 1870.

²³ For other unfavorable comments on Negro labor, see *Enquirer*, January 4 and 22, 1867. These accounts were taken from the *Lynchburg News*. See also *Enquirer*, February 28, 1868, for an account taken from the *Warrenton Sentinel*, and the issue of March 16, 1868. See also *Enquirer*, February 6, 1867, for publication of a circular issued by the Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent of Alexandria and Fairfax counties urging resident Negroes to diffuse and accept employment elsewhere.

For favorable reports on Negro labor, see *Enquirer*, May 30, 1867, and October 4, 1867.

For reports on crops, see *Enquirer*, March to September of 1866 to 1870 inclusive. Note particularly the reports taken from such newspapers as the *Winchester News*, *Winchester Times*, *Danville Register*, *Abingdon Virginian*, *Rockingham Register*, *Lynchburg News*, *Norfolk Day Book*, *Lynchburg Virginian*, *Greenbriar Independent*, and the *Clarksville Tobacco Plant*.

and town in the South is crowded with able-bodied men, young and healthy, and many of them have no avocation or business, and are making a living, or rather manage to keep alive, but by what means is wholly unknown. They are absorbing all the energies of the country, and give it no aid. In the cities are also to be found hundreds and thousands of young men seeking employment in stores, lawyers' offices and other places, in order to avoid labor on the farms and plantations, many of which are becoming wildernesses for the want of labor. It is a remarkable fact that not one in fifty of these applicants have either the capacity or qualifications to make merchants or lawyers, nor is such their purpose; for they seem to have no further object, desire, or hope than to get 'a place' to avoid manual labor."²⁴

During these years, too, the Negroes were leaving the farms for another reason. They gradually shifted to other occupations in which some had worked prior to emancipation. One such occupation arose in connection with the internal improvements undertaken in the State. Some time after the restoration of peace, the Virginia railroads were reorganized. The lines running from Norfolk to Memphis, Knoxville, New Orleans and other Southern points were placed under the management of General William Mahone. He consolidated the Norfolk and Petersburg, the Southside and the Virginia and Tennessee roads on which improvements commenced requiring the extensive use of common labor. In the meantime, certain minor roads commenced to extend their mileage and some canal construction began.²⁵ Furthermore, the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad began a vast westward expansion. The new work increased the demand for Negro labor. Finding the freedmen efficient workers, the contractors offered them wages averaging \$1.75 a day.²⁶ Thousands of Negroes responded to this demand for the reason that farmers could not pay an equal wage. As a result the Farmers' Council authorized negotiations seeking an amicable readjustment of the railroad wage scale for common labor. In the meantime, the railroads having satis-

²⁴ *Whig*, Oct. 5, 1874.

²⁵ *Enquirer*, August 3 and 23, October 4, 1866; July 21, 1871.

²⁶ *Whig*, May 27, 1871.

fied their pressing demand voluntarily reduced the wages prior to 1874.²⁷

Nevertheless, the Negroes continued to supply the local railroad demand. The Southern railways and other great works were almost entirely constructed by black labor.²⁸ A traveler there accounts for this preference of Negro labor by the fact that people accustomed to it do not seem to be able to get on well without it. Perhaps the exact number of Negroes engaged in railroad construction during these years has never been ascertained. That the number was large there can be little doubt. A report circulated that the Chesapeake and Ohio road employed practically 5,000 Negro laborers in 1871. But this number is no index to the volume of Negro railroad employees for the reason that railroads hired freedmen in various capacities. The Negroes were commonly engaged as railroad brakemen and firemen; and, in the shops, they were used as laborers, helpers, and mechanics.²⁹

In the cities, moreover, the Negroes predominated in various forms of common labor, and engaged, to some extent, in the skilled trades. Referring to the rebuilding of the burnt district in Richmond, Trowbridge wrote in 1866: "Here, I had the satisfaction of seeing the negroes who 'would not work,' actually at their tasks. Here, as everywhere else in Richmond, and indeed in every part of Virginia I visited, colored laborers were largely in the majority. They drove the teams, made the mortar, carried the hods, excavated the old cellars, or dug new ones, and sitting down amid the ruins, broke the mortar from the old bricks and put them up in neat piles ready for use. There were also colored masons and carpenters employed on the new buildings. I could not see but that these people worked just as industriously as the white laborers."³⁰

²⁷ *Report of the Committee on Labor to the Farmers' Council* convening at Petersburg in 1874. *Whig*, November 25, 1874.

²⁸ Campbell, *White and Black*, 285.

²⁹ *Whig*, May 27 and September 28, 1871. References to Negro railway employees are made in the public press.

³⁰ Trowbridge, *The South*, 150.

With regard to the industry of urban Negroes, observers have commonly agreed with Trowbridge. The Robertsons, visiting Richmond in 1869, saw Negroes "pursuing their avocations diligently as waiters, porters, laborers, shopkeepers, masons, carpenters, and house-servants."³¹ Edward King said that freedmen of Lynchburg worked diligently about the station and the women, "cleanly and nicely dressed," sold vegetables and other commodities in the open air market.³² In 1879, Sir George Campbell observed that Negroes monopolized the work about the wharves at Hampton, as the public press stated they did elsewhere. In Petersburg, according to Campbell, the different occupations were divided along racial lines. The United States employees were generally black; but the State and municipal workers, including those who swept the streets, were mostly white. Emphasizing the reliance upon Negro labor, Sir George Campbell said: "Not only is the negro labour excellent, but also there is among the Southern proprietors and leading men accustomed to black labour, and not so used to whites, a disposition greatly to rely on black labour as a conservative element, securing them against the dangers and difficulties which they see arising from the combinations and violence of white labourers in some of the Northern States."³³

The *Whig* reported, furthermore, an increase in the number of Negroes working at the skilled trades in 1871.³⁴ Negro labor predominated in the principal urban industries. Practically all travelers saw the blacks at work in the tobacco factories.³⁵ According to Macrae, Cameron's Richmond factory which had introduced machinery substituting hydraulic presses for the old hand screws "employed large numbers of negroes who, in the opinion of their employer, 'worked more heartily since they had the stimulus of remuneration.'"³⁶ In

³¹ William and W. E. Robertson, *Our American Tour*, 115.

³² King, *The Great South*, 554.

³³ Campbell, *White and Black, The Outcome of a Visit to the United States*, 143.

³⁴ *Whig*, May 27, 1871, and March 28, 1873; *Enquirer*, April 7, 1869. Campbell, *White and Black*, 284.

³⁵ This industry was somewhat handicapped by an unfair law making a discrimination between fine-cut and plug tobacco. Negroes held meetings and memorialized Congress for relief. See *Dispatch*, March 5 and April 6, 1872.

³⁶ Macrae, *Americans at Home*, I, 150-152.

1874, Edward King stated that the thirty-five tobacco factories of Lynchburg employed large numbers of Negroes who earned high wages, worked faithfully and turned out vast quantities of the "black, ugly compound known as 'plug,' which has enslaved so many thousands, and promoted such a sublime disregard for the proprieties in the matter of expecoration. . . . In the manufactories the negro is the same cheery, capricious being that one finds him in the cotton or sugarcane-fields; he sings quaintly over his toil, and seems entirely devoid of the sullen ambition which many of our Northern factory laborers exhibit. The men and women working around the tables in the basements of the Lynchburg tobacco establishments croon eccentric hymns in concert all day long; and their little children, laboring before they are hardly large enough to go alone, join in the refrains."³⁷ In Petersburg, said King, hundreds of the dusky forms toiled in the tobacco factories while an equal number slouched outside in the sunshine.³⁸ But he added that approximately five thousand Negroes worked in the tobacco warehouses.³⁹ Referring to Richmond, King wrote that some forty-five tobacco factories were in operation, "each employing from fifty to two hundred hands, and each producing from 1,500 to 20,000 pounds of manufactured tobacco daily."⁴⁰ Hundreds of Negroes, said he, worked in these factories, and also in the tobacco warehouses opening the hogsheads for the inspectors and arranging the lots of tobacco.⁴¹

The Robertsons said in 1871: "We visited one of the numerous tobacco manufactories in the city, that of Mr. Mayo, whose business was the production of chewing-tobacco, in the preparation of which we saw some fifty men, women, and boys engaged. The principal workman was a well-dressed, intelligent looking negro, in a clean white shirt, who, Mr. Mayo informed us, had been with him as a slave upwards of thirty years, and still retained his old post as a paid servant.

³⁷ King, *The Great South*, 556.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 580.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 582.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 633.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 634, 635.

Many of the other workers had also been nearly all their lives in the same establishment as slaves. They were all well-dressed, clean, and tidy, and one knot of workers accompanied their occupation with a hymn, well sung in parts in a low dulcet tone, as they went on with the twisting and sorting of the weed.”⁴²

Giving his observations, Sir George Campbell said: “I went to see a great tobacco factory. It is entirely confined to the manufacture of chewing-tobacco. By far the greatest part of the labour is done by blacks. Tobacco seems to be specially their vocation. Most of the foremen are whites, and some of the work is done by white and black men mixed. I did not see any mixture of white and black women; that does not seem to be allowed. Cigars, it seems, are not made by blacks; it is one of the skilled things they do not do. The black labourers in the factory get about a dollar a day for moderately skilled work, and sometimes more; they do not work very regularly—they average about four days a week. All seem to agree that negroes are fond of amusement; they like to make the most of life. They go on excursions, fishing expeditions, and so on, and thus vary their hard work. In the tobacco factory the women were set to sing for my benefit, and they certainly do that very well. The tobacco-leaves are dried and packed in hogsheads by the farmers, and in that shape they come to the manufactories. The value very much depends on the way in which the drying process is done by the farmers.”⁴³

The freedmen also worked in the flour mills. With regard to “the great flour mills” of Richmond, Sir George Campbell wrote that “most of the labour is black, but the really skilled work must be done by the whites.” “I saw,” said he, “a good deal of work in which black and white men are employed indiscriminately, and are paid the same. There are said to be no signs of jealousy between the two races.”⁴⁴ “At Richmond I visited a large flour mill,” said Saunders, “and found many negroes engaged therein. The proprietor stated

⁴² Robertson and Robertson, *Our American Tour*, 116.

⁴³ Campbell, *White and Black, The Outcome of a Visit to the United States*, 285.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 288.

that they were more regular in their attendance than white men, and therefore he gave them the preference.”⁴⁵

The predominance of Negro labor in these industries continued. According to Sala, who visited America a second time in 1880: “The great iron-works, the flour mills, the tobacco and cigar manufactories of the Virginian capital are all willing to employ negro hands at good wages; and from ocular experience I can vouch for the fact that colored mechanics and laborers are largely employed in all the great industries which are making Richmond a city as great and prosperous as she is beautiful.”⁴⁶ “The indolent, shiftless negroes,” added Sala, “constitute only a small minority of the colored race in Virginia.”⁴⁷ The testimony of native whites, moreover, strongly corroborates these statements. Writing of Richmond, Land and Thompson stated that “Richmond’s supply of labor is fully equal to the demand, both in numerical and skillful requirements. The colored element predominates in those lines demanding great muscular powers and forms an invaluable class of labor. In the manufacture of plug tobacco, which requires skill and activity, the negro is peculiarly fitted to fill the requirements, and we may with truth say that he monopolizes that branch of the industry.”⁴⁸

Native public officials also attested the value and efficiency of Negro industrial labor. Speaking of this labor United States Senator John W. Johnston, of Virginia, asserted that it constituted “the bulk of the labor used in the manufacture of Virginia’s great staple—tobacco.” “Without negro labor,” he asserted, “Virginia would be deprived of a great part of her revenue.”⁴⁹ Governor Holliday, it was reported, considered Negro labor the “conservative element in the country as contrasted with the communistic and troublesome among the white workmen.” The blacks, he said, were “quite free from trade unionism and com-

⁴⁵ Saunders, *Through the Light Continent*, 76.

⁴⁶ Sala, *America Revisited*, 169.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁸ Land and Thompson, *Richmond*, 41.

⁴⁹ From a speech made at Norfolk. Reported in the *Dispatch*, October 2, 1879.

munism.”⁵⁰ The Commissioner of Agriculture stated in his official report of 1889 that the manufacturing and mining labor of Virginia was “less liable to strikes and interruptions than that of any northern or western State.”⁵¹

Returning to work after the excitement of emancipation had subsided, however, a few Negroes caught the spirit of organized labor of that day. They, too, were determined to enjoy the larger portion of the fruits of their labor. The Negroes began to organize unions⁵² and to insist on larger compensation. Strikes for higher wages in the tobacco factories became common.⁵³ Petersburg seemed to have much trouble in this respect.⁵⁴ There was reported a stevedores’ strike at Richmond on May 4, 1867;⁵⁵ mention of another such at City Point appeared April 2, 1869;⁵⁶ and on May 6, 1872, still another of Negroes employed in the freight sheds of the Richmond and Danville Railroad.⁵⁷ And it was not merely a cessation of labor but along with it a determination to carry their point. Laborers refusing to join with them were subjected to force. This happened in the case of the stevedores strike on May 4, 1867, and also in that of the woodcutters in Staunton on Feb. 8, 1879.⁵⁸ The idea of union, too, tended to develop with the years. In 1875 there assembled a State convention of Negroes who organized the Laboring Men’s Mechanics Union Association. The purposes as stated were to protect labor and promote the economic development of Negroes. Some of the same persons thus interested held another convention in 1879 to regulate wages, but it does not appear that the organization accomplished more than what had been done locally by strikes which had broken out here and there.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Campbell, *White and Black*, 287.

⁵¹ *Virginia*, 1889, 34.

⁵² *Enquirer*, Sept. 14, 1866; Aug. 21, 1878.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 26, Oct. 9, 1866; Feb. 22, May 15, Sept. 11, 1867; May 26, 1869; and *Dispatch*, April 30, 1873; June 12, 1875.

⁵⁴ *Enquirer* and *Times*, Feb. 21, 22, 1867; *Enquirer*, Sept. 26, 1867; May 21, 1872; June 25, 1875, and the *Whig*, March 25, 28, 1873.

⁵⁵ *Enquirer*, May 4, 1867.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1869.

⁵⁷ *Dispatch*, May 6, 1872.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1879.

⁵⁹ *Dispatch* and *Enquirer*, August 21, 22, 1875; *Dispatch*, June 16, 1879.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEGRO AN EFFICIENT LABORER

The downfall of slavery disrupted the old labor system as shown above, and the employers had difficulty in readjusting matters. A new system, however, was finally worked out upon the principle of free competition. Under the new arrangement the laborer might hire himself for a compensation determined in a general way by the economic law of supply and demand. The system, moreover, excluded the element of compulsion, and made the material well-being of the freedman depend upon his own efforts. Impelled by self-interest, then, the majority of the freedmen settled down as workers either for wages or for a share of the crops in the case of agriculture.

Exactly how efficient the freedmen became may be learned from those who observed them at work. The editor of the *Richmond Times*, a strong advocate of the forced labor of the blacks, conceded the success of free labor in a statement published on March 10, 1866. "After going through the Christmas holidays under a full head of steam which led many to apprehend that they would keep up their 'jubilee' for another year," said the editor, "a large proportion of the best negroes were suddenly restored to their senses. Thousands have, for fixed wages, gone steadily to work on plantations and farms in this State, and are, we learn, respectful, obedient, and moderately industrious, while those who have the additional stimulus of a 'share in the crop' are said to be doing remarkably well. Many of our country friends who were most despondent about the utility of Cuffee as a 'freedman' are much more hopeful than they were some months ago, and assure us, that when encouraged by the prompt payment of moderate wages, the freedman can be made to do a very good day's work."

Referring again to the efficiency of Negro labor, the same

editor wrote on August 1, 1866: "Two of the principal crops of this State have been cultivated and placed beyond the possibility of failure by the freedmen since the 1st of January, 1866. The oat crop, which is one of unprecedented excellence, has already been cut and either housed or threshed and stacked. The corn crop, to use the language of the farmer, has been worked and 'laid by.' So far as our own observation extends, where the freedmen have been paid good wages, or allowed a liberal share in the crops, they have done fully as well as when they were slaves." Continuing, the editor said: "In one instance, in which we felt deeply interested in the result, they have done twice as well as they did before the war."

With an equal zeal, the efficiency of the Negro farm laborer was extolled in the State Farmers' Convention held in Richmond in November 1866. Addressing that body from the subject of labor conditions in Virginia, Willoughby Newton, the president of the Virginia Agricultural Society, expressed the opinion that "we have in the labor of the freedmen a decided advantage over other portions of the world." "After having had some experience with white laborers, both foreign and native," said Newton, "I have come to the conclusion that the world cannot produce a more skillful and efficient farm laborer than a well-trained Virginia negro who is willing and able to work."¹ In much the same manner, the value of the Negro as a farm laborer was attested by W. T. Sutherlin, a large planter and prominent resident of Danville. Speaking before the convention, Sutherlin stated that for the purpose of farm labor no race was more valuable than the Negro. "His docility, tractability and affectionate disposition rendered him just the material desirable and necessary."² Sutherlin greatly preferred Negro laborers to whites, and strongly urged those requiring a working force to employ the blacks in preference to others.³ The promising crops produced with inadequate labor and the rapidity with which the State economically adjusted itself support him in these conclusions.⁴

¹ Richmond *Times*, November 21, 1866.

² *Enquirer*, November 24, 1866.

³ *Times*, November 23, 1866.

⁴ *Enquirer*, Sept. 7, 1866; Feb. 1, July 1, 1867; Jan. 19, 1869; Jan. 8, June

Negro labor continued the main reliance of the farming interests. Referring to labor conditions in the State, the official *Handbook of Virginia* for 1879 stated that "agricultural labor is supplied chiefly by the negro, and he has no superior as a farm laborer."⁵ Continuing, the document says that "it has been too much the custom to denounce him (the negro) as thriftless and lazy. Among this class there are some who will not work, and this is the case in most races; but if the negro is promptly and fairly paid, enough good laborers can be obtained among them to till our farms properly."⁶ Stating that the compensation paid at that time ranged from eight dollars to twelve a month and rations,⁷ the document says that "the difficulty the farmer has, is to obtain money enough to pay his laborer promptly, and sufficiently to support his family."⁸

For this reason many laborers shunned the wage-system, preferring instead to work for a share of the crops. Under the share system, the farmer generally rented his land to Negroes of enterprise and character for one-half of the crops. The farmer, as a rule, supplied the implements and teams; but the tenant hired and supervised the working force, supplied the rations and fed the stock. This system worked admirably in the lowlands of Virginia where the farmer generally cultivated cotton. There the cotton yield varied from one bale to one and a half bales an acre and the price was sufficient to yield satisfactory returns to both the proprietor and the tenant.⁹

Generally speaking, however, the share system was disappointing. In unfavorable seasons it affected the laborer adversely because of the uncertain reward. Besides, employers often exploited the laborers who received little or nothing at the end of a season. Finally, whenever the

18, 1870; March 10, 1871; July 21, 1873; Nov. 15, 1872; Jan. 1, Feb. 7, April 29, 1873.

⁵ *A Handbook of Virginia*, 1879, 56.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

⁹ *Enquirer*, September 17, 1872.

worker was unreliable disaster naturally resulted.¹⁰ "The chief difficulty of the (tenant) system, which to a great extent frees the negro from supervision and compulsion," said a writer, "lies in his unbusiness-like qualities, rather than in his deliberate idleness, and in the frequent holidays necessary to indulge in."¹¹ Some Negroes, at first, found the system unsatisfactory, themselves.¹²

Other systems also appealed strongly to the freedmen. Many either purchased or rented land which they cultivated without withdrawing from other occupations. Some among the tenant proprietors paid their rent in money, others in labor. This system developed most fully in southeastern Virginia where the Union reestablished authority early in the war. There many freedmen quickly became self-supporting, according to official statistics, showing that less than 4,500 received government aid in December 1865. The freedmen acquired land on which they planted vegetables, an immense quantity of which was produced to supply the winter and spring markets of Northern cities. The Negroes also engaged in fishing and oystering.¹³ Because of the large money returns from these occupations, the 14,236 oystermen in the State in 1880 included 7,698 Negroes.¹⁴

Referring to the last mentioned industry one brought out in a letter from Northampton the fact that before the farmers of the oyster region could have any laborers the fishery had to be supplied. He said: "Labor is scarce. Many negroes are engaged in dredging for oysters in the sound up the bay, and others preferring to work by the day; and to hire a good work-hand by the month or year is difficult. The farmers, however, are not discouraged, determining to go ahead with what they can do themselves, together with their sons,—

¹⁰ Somers, *The Southern States Since the War*, 280-281; Campbell, *White and Black*, 285.

¹¹ *Living Age* (1884), vol. 161, p. 369.

¹² *Enquirer*, Dec. 17, 1866.

¹³ *Enquirer*, Jan. 1 and 21, 1868; Jan. 21, 1873; June 10, 1875.

¹⁴ Trowbridge, *The South*, 232-233; Hillyard, *The New South*, 92-93; Campbell, *White and Black*, 286; Maury, *Physical Survey of Virginia* (1871); *Report of the Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau*, June 15-December 15, 1865; *Nation*, II, January 15, 1866.

those who are so fortunate as to have them large enough to work—teaching them a lesson which it may have been better for them to have learned before.”¹⁵ Many white planters, therefore, were reduced to the necessity of tilling their own fields and fortunately so since neither the Negroes nor the immigrants under the changed circumstances could supply the demand for labor.¹⁶

With respect to the Negro as a skilled laborer, however, contemporary opinion differed sharply. Speaking from the standpoint of a native, Edward A. Pollard, the Virginia historian, said in 1872: “It has been urged that the South would have to look to the market of white labor at least for skilled artisans; that the labor of the negro is ponderous and inaccurate, and is suited only for the rude work of the fields. But here, too, is a mistake. A juster observation discovers that the negro may be educated for any kind of work; that the creature whom Providence has so plainly designed as a laborer has wonderful capacities as such; that he has really a nice nervous hand, when it has not been actually blunted by rough work; and that kindly treated and taught, he is serviceable through a range of employments extending from the nicest offices of handicraft to the rudest tasks of the field and forge.”¹⁷ In presenting evidence to support his thesis, Pollard wrote of the artistic productions of Virginia Negro seamstresses and the “exquisite artificial flowers” made by the Negroes of Brazil.

According to the evidence found, moreover, a far-reaching diversification of labor took place among the Negroes after emancipation. While most freedmen entered occupations theretofore open to the blacks, some few emerged from the lower economic orders. In the change, however, the drift was commonly away from agriculture in which the slaves

¹⁵ *Dispatch*, Jan. 21, 1873. See also *Dispatch*, June 10, 1875.

¹⁶ *Enquirer*, June 27, 1866; *Dispatch*, Jan. 21, 1873.

¹⁷ Edward A. Pollard, in *Old and New*, March 1872, V, 287.

¹⁸ See the testimony of Norton, 51, and Bayne, 58, in the Reconstruction Committee Report, Part I, 1866; the newspapers also (1867–1875) referred to Norton and Bayne as doctors. See Dixon, *New America*, I, 328, and *White Conquest*, II, 162, for reference to Negroes in professions.

had primarily engaged. The official statistics of this readjustment were first published in the United States Census for 1890. In this year, the Negroes comprised 38.4 per cent of the population, but they furnished 43.7 per cent of the total number of persons in gainful occupations. There were reported 241,095 Negroes engaged in the following occupations: in agriculture, fisheries and mining, 103,913; in domestic and personal service, 95,383; in manufacturing and mechanical industries, 23,326; in trade and transportation, 15,907; and in professional capacities, 2,566. More specifically, the Negroes engaged in productive enterprises in Virginia included 31,100 of the farmer and overseer class, 2,000 carpenters, 1,068 merchants, 835 barbers, 745 masons, 403 coopers, 1,459 teachers, 747 clergymen, 39 physicians and 38 lawyers.¹⁹

These official statistics tend to corroborate the evidence previously submitted by public officials and their contemporaries to show the rapid adjustment of the freedmen to the new economic system. These statistics also tend to explain, in part, the reduced volume of the State's agricultural productions. An analysis of the census returns, herewith submitted, will show the varying yields of each important crop in the different years selected.²⁰

TABLE I: VIRGINIA CROPS FOR FOUR DECADES

Product	Unit	1850	1860	1870	1880
Tobacco.....	Pounds	56,803,227	123,968,312	37,086,364	79,988,868
Cotton.....	Bales	3,947	12,727	183	19,595
Hay.....	Tons	369,098	445,133	199,883	287,255
Indian Corn.....	Bushels	35,254,319	38,319,999	17,649,304	29,119,761
Wheat.....	"	11,212,616	13,130,977	7,398,787	7,826,174
Oats.....	"	10,179,144	10,186,720	6,857,555	5,333,181
Rye.....	"	458,930	944,330	582,264	324,431
Irish Potatoes.....	"	1,316,933	2,292,398	1,293,853	2,016,766
Sweet Potatoes.....	"	1,813,634	1,960,817	865,882	1,901,521
Buckwheat.....	"	214,898	478,090	45,075	136,004
Barley.....	"	25,437	68,846	7,259	14,223

In considering the census returns exhibited in Table I, however, it must be borne in mind that Virginia was dismembered to form the State of West Virginia in 1863. There-

¹⁹ *United States Census Reports 1890, Compendium, Part III, Table 76.*

²⁰ *Compendium of the Tenth Census, 1880. Table XLIII.*

fore the census returns of 1870 and of 1880 refer to a smaller area than those of 1850 and 1860. Besides, the returns of 1870 reported a decrease below the population of 1860. In 1870, moreover, the total Negro population of Virginia and West Virginia was smaller than that class of the population of Virginia in 1860. It will be instructive, therefore, to consider the census returns of crop productions in West Virginia for 1870 and 1880.

TABLE II:²¹ PRODUCTS OF WEST VIRGINIA IN 1870 AND 1880

Product	Unit	1870	1880
Tobacco.....	Pounds	2,046,452	2,296,146
Cotton.....	Bales	2	—
Hay.....	Tons	224,164	232,338
Indian Corn.....	Bushels	8,197,865	14,090,609
Wheat.....	"	2,483,543	4,001,711
Oats.....	"	2,413,749	1,908,505
Rye.....	"	277,746	113,181
Irish Potatoes.....	"	1,053,507	1,398,539
Sweet Potatoes.....	"	46,984	87,214
Buckwheat.....	"	82,916	285,298
Barley.....	"	50,363	9,740

An analysis of Tables I and II will show, with a few exceptions, that each crop produced in Virginia in 1860 was greater than the total Virginia and West Virginia yield of the same crop in either 1870 or 1880. On the contrary, the Virginia crop of 1880 exceeded that of 1870 by virtually fifty per cent. Yet the crop output did not diminish violently and suddenly as the United States Department of Agriculture reports show. According to these records, Virginia produced 114,480,516 pounds of tobacco in 1866; 93,600,000 pounds in 1868; and 35,000,000 pounds in 1874. Similarly the Indian corn crop decreased from 24,369,908 bushels in 1866 to 19,082,000 in 1874. Furthermore, the decreased volume of crops was not due entirely to the partial withdrawal of Negro labor from the farms, but resulted partly from other significant causes. The chief among the latter were the impoverishment of the soil to the extent that it could not compete with that of certain western States in producing cereal crops, and the

²¹ *Compendium of the Tenth Census, 1880. Table XLIII.*

shifting interests of some Virginia capitalists from agriculture to the development of the industrial resources of the State.

In the efficient development of Virginia industries Negro labor was found an indispensable asset. Statistics do not attest the worth of this labor in industrial enterprises, however, for the reason that they do not show the extent of retardation caused the industries by the war. The development of railroad facilities was a case in point. There were 1,771.16 miles of steam railroad in Virginia in 1860. In 1870, there were 1,483 miles. At the same time the mileage in West Virginia amounted to 387. This brought the amount of single track in the two States up to 1,870 miles, an increase of 98.84 miles since 1860. In 1880, the single track road of Virginia amounted to 1,697.06 miles, and that of West Virginia extended 691.56 miles.²²

In a limited way, statistics register the worth of Negro labor in manufactures, since that labor played a large part in the rehabilitation of Virginia industries. In 1880, the valuation of the output in Virginia exceeded that of 1860 by \$1,000,000. But in 1880, the combined outputs of Virginia and West Virginia exceeded the Virginia output of 1860 by practically \$24,000,000. A further comparison of the statistics herewith submitted will indicate the general progress achieved.

TABLE III: MANUFACTURING STATISTICS OF VIRGINIA ²³

Year	No. of Estab- lishments	Capital Invested	Hands Em- ployed	Wages Paid	Cost Mat. Used	Value Products
1850..	4,740	\$18,109,143	29,110	\$5,434,476	\$18,101,131	\$29,602,507
1860..	5,387	26,935,560	36,174	8,544,117	30,840,531	50,652,124
1870..	5,933	18,455,400	26,974	5,343,099	23,832,384	38,364,322
1880..	5,710	26,968,990	40,184	7,425,261	32,883,933	51,780,992

²² *United States Census Reports: 1860, Volume of Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics*, 328-329; *Ibid.*, 1890, Abstract of the *Eleventh Census*, 218. H. V. Poor, *Manual of Railroads*, 1870-1871, XLIII.

²³ Taken from the *Compendium of the Tenth Census*, 1880, Part 2, Table L. The statistics of 1850 and 1870 are defective, but not worthless.

TABLE IV: MANUFACTURING STATISTICS OF WEST VIRGINIA ²⁴

Year	No. of Estab- lishments	Capital Invested	Hands Em- ployed	Wages Paid	Cost Mat. Used	Value Products
1870..	2,444	\$11,084,520	11,672	\$4,322,164	\$14,503,701	\$24,102,201
1880..	2,375	13,883,390	14,311	4,313,965	14,027,388	22,867,126

The economic status of the freedmen closely connected with the type and efficiency of their labor. As they shifted into better paying occupations many utilized their increased returns to purchase property. This, in turn, exerted a stabilizing effect upon these people as citizens. Referring to this aspect of the freedmen's development, W. H. Ruffner, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, showed that many Negroes had exhibited evidences of thrift during slavery. In his annual report for 1871, Ruffner said: "The more striking evidences of thrift are, of course, given by comparatively a small proportion of the race, and the general willingness to labor which exists among them is to be partly accounted for by the habit having been formed in slavery. But in the past history of the race in America, there have always been examples of negro shrewdness and enterprise in every neighborhood. . . . With the very limited opportunities which a slave had for getting money, it is astonishing how many of them bought themselves and their families, in order to enjoy freedom. And how common it was for them to gain money for themselves by extra work, by little manufactures and other honest means. And it is not to be forgotten that during the late war, the negroes of Richmond contributed thousands of dollars to sustain the Confederacy, and many stood the test of the battlefield on both sides." ²⁵

Referring to the striking tangible evidences of thrift among the Negroes since emancipation, Ruffner pointed out their patronage of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. Ruffner stated that the total sum of money deposited by the freedmen throughout the country up to July 1, 1870, was \$16,960,336.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Annual Reports, Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1871, 118.*

There remained on deposit at this time \$2,000,000. The amount of money deposited in Richmond up to July 1, 1870, was \$318,913. The balance undrawn was \$84,537. The average deposit was nearly \$284. In August 1871, the deposits made in the Richmond branch amounted to \$17,790.60. This brought the amount due to depositors up to \$123,733.75. In Lynchburg, a branch then lately opened had an undrawn balance of \$7,382.83. Of the total deposits withdrawn in the State, it was reported, seventy per cent had been invested in business and real estate.²⁶

At the outset of freedom, therefore, Negroes began to acquire land. Yet Negroes desiring to purchase experienced difficulty despite the decrease in value of farm lands immediately after the war. Several causes brought about this result. In the first place, many planters believed that large scale production based upon a general introduction of machinery would serve Virginian agricultural interests best. Such planters generally refused to sell land to Negroes, and undertook to restrict the latter to the occupation of farm laborer.²⁷ When events demanded the total abandonment of the old slave system, however, the hostility against the Negro's acquisition of land diminished. Yet restrictions remained for the reason that the Negroes were too poor to purchase large tracts of land, and the planters were not disposed to sell small quantities.²⁸ The freedmen were prevented from purchasing good land, moreover, because of social prejudices against admitting them into white communities.²⁹

The Negroes, however, worked independently in their own communities. With regard to such independent Negro farmers, moreover, there were reported instances of exceptional thrift. Writing from Amelia County in 1871, a correspondent stated that Henry Smith, a colored man, aided by

²⁶ *Annual Reports, etc.*, 118. \$6,929.19 of the undrawn balance in Richmond, August 1871, belonged to white persons.

²⁷ Richmond *Times and Enquirer*, Nov. 21-24, 1866; *Times*, Nov. 27, 1866.

²⁸ Trowbridge, *The South*, 232-233; Report of Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau, June 15-December 15, 1865, and for 1867. See also *Nation*, II, January 15, 1866, and *Enquirer*, Nov. 21, 26, 1866.

²⁹ Campbell, *White and Black*, 276.

his wife and two small boys, had "made . . . sixty-six barrels of good corn, seventy-five bushels of wheat, seventy bushels of sweet potatoes, six stacks of oats, five stacks of fodder, (and) fifteen hundred pounds of tobacco." Smith had also killed five hogs and caught a number of rabbits and beaver during the season.³⁰ In the next year, a correspondent wrote from Buckingham County that James Clark and Ben Mosely, Negro farmers, working two yoke of oxen, had "made ninety barrels of corn, several hogsheads of tobacco and other crops, oats, etc." There lived in Buckingham, also, according to this correspondent, George Shepard and Zack Griffen, successful Negro farmers, who were accumulating money and supporting their families in independence.³¹

And this was the situation. The ambition of the Negro was to become an independent farmer. Land was offered for sale but it was usually too high for the Negro to buy very much of it. Yet he struggled on. He soon ceased to put any faith in the promise of the politician that the Yankees would give each freedman forty acres of land and a mule. Considering the difficulties which all persons experienced in obtaining hard cash during these years, however, the acquisition of land by Negroes was remarkable. As fast as he could spare funds from his earnings he bought land or purchased a home.³² In 1868 Negroes in Richmond showed concerted action in this direction by organizing the Virginia Home Building Fund and Loan Association. Peter H. Woolfolk was made President, Robert L. Hobson, Secretary, and Thomas Hewlett, Treasurer.³³ In 1875, John M. Langston was reported as having accepted the presidency of the Richmond Land and Financial Association chartered by the State Legislature to purchase lands to be sold in small parcels to Negroes.³⁴

"With the view of giving a fair trial to the negroes," said Sir George Campbell in 1879, referring to southeastern Vir-

³⁰ *Whig*, February 10, 1871.

³¹ *Whig*, December 18, 1872.

³² *Dispatch*, July 11, 1870, May 6, 1871.

³³ *Enquirer*, Oct. 27, 1868.

³⁴ *Dispatch*, June 23, 1875.

ginia, "a good deal of land here has been sold in small patches, which they have bought; and a good many private proprietors, following this example, have done likewise, so that there is quite a large black proprietary, owning their own patches of land and their own cottages. The patches, however, are very small, but are said to be large enough to grow vegetables; and there is so much fishing and easy living here, that the negroes are not obliged to work very hard. An immense quantity of vegetables is raised in this part of Virginia, to supply the winter and spring markets of the great towns of the North." ³⁵

The principal acquisitions were made in southeastern Virginia. In Norfolk, Princess Anne and adjacent counties, wrote Trowbridge, planters sold lands to the freedmen who rapidly became a respectable solid tax-paying class.³⁶ Other travelers similarly impressed recorded evidences of these rapid strides of the Negro toward farm ownership and economic independence.³⁷ Dixon wrote of Negroes owning small farms along the James,³⁸ and a correspondent said that lands sold under decree in Buckingham County were being rented and sold to Negroes.³⁹ The Negroes in Gloucester County, moreover, it has been stated, owned about 537 acres of land in 1865. In 1880, 195 Negroes in the same county owned about 2,300 acres.⁴⁰

In addition to such holdings, however, reports circulated that some Negroes purchased large tracts of land. One such report ran that a Negro living near Norfolk purchased 1,000 acres of land for \$10,000 in 1866.⁴¹ In the same year, it was reported that some three hundred freedmen of Elizabeth City County had pooled their resources of \$30,000 with which to purchase a large estate in that county.⁴² Two years later the Danville *Times* reported that Tom Sukins, a freedman in

³⁵ Campbell, *White and Black, The Outcome of a Visit to the United States*, 277.

³⁶ Trowbridge, *The South*, 232-233.

³⁷ See almost any book of travel giving impressions of Virginia during these years.

³⁸ Dixon, *White Conquest*, II, 160-161.

³⁹ *Whig*, Oct. 16, 1873.

⁴⁰ T. C. Walker, *Negro Property Holding in Tidewater Virginia*, Annals American Academy of Political and Social Science, Sept. 1913.

⁴¹ *Freedmen's Record*, Feb. 1866, II, 26.

⁴² *Times*, Jan. 6, 1866; *Freedman's Record*, Feb. 1866, II, 22.

Charlotte County, had bought there 1,500 acres of land at \$2 an acre. And in 1873, the Warrenton *Index* stated that Tom Gaskins, a Negro, had purchased a tract of 85 acres sold under decree. The price was \$9.50 an acre.⁴³

The extent to which they obtained such holdings, however, cannot be accurately determined for lack of proper records. Some of the records of the counties were lost during the Civil War and others at different times were lost by fire. Archdeacon James S. Russell of the St. Paul Industrial School, Lawrenceville, Virginia, however, who has made some study of such available county records, has estimated that the Virginia Negroes acquired from 80,000 to 100,000 acres of land during the late 60's and early 70's. The estimate must be conceded as approximately correct when we consider that during the thirty years from 1870-1900 the Virginia Negroes acquired 1,031,331 acres of land divided into 25,566 farms of an average acreage of 38.8, valued with the buildings thereon at \$12,915,931.^{43a}

Archdeacon Russell has also mentioned the names of outstanding persons who were of the first to purchase land in some of these counties. John Pree and Joseph Diggs were joint owners of 42 acres of land in James City County about 1870. Rev. J. M. Dawson had 60 acres in the same county while possessing certain lots in Williamsburg; and Samuel Harris, a merchant of that town, had valuable property there during these years. One Dr. Norton and brother had a farm of considerable size in York County and so did J. B. Mitchell who passed as a farmer of considerable means. Andrew Williams of Elizabeth City County had there a farm of 100 acres and at the same time possessed other valuable property in Hampton. James A. Field, a more prosperous farmer in Warwick County, possessed both farm and city property appraised at his death at \$50,000. J. Anderson Greene acquired more than 500 acres, Ruffin Callis about 600 and Ephraim Gaines more than 1,000 acres in Brunswick County during these years. Among other such prosperous farmers should be mentioned Watt Love who operated a farm of his own of 500

⁴³ *Enquirer*, April 16, 1868; *Whig*, June 4, 1873.

^{43a} *United States Census Reports*, 1900.

acres of land near Boydton and Sandy and William Bowers who had a farm of about 1,000 acres.^{43b}

Judging from similar reports, Negroes purchased holdings, here and there, throughout the State, but in the absence of official statistics the extent of Negro ownership of land is not known prior to 1890. The United States Census for that year states that 13,678 Negro families owned farms in Virginia. The property of 571 of these owners was encumbered. In 1891, Negroes owned 698,074 acres of farm land, the assessed value of which, according to the Virginia State Auditor, was \$2,938,064.⁴⁴ The Negroes controlled a considerable acreage they did not own. There were 18,161 tenant proprietors of farms in 1890.⁴⁵

In addition to rural property, the Negroes acquired urban real estate also. Among the several reports of their urban holdings one stated that the Negroes of Alexandria had built 1,000 dwellings, and invested \$50,000 in the purchase of ground rents and lots between 1862 and 1865.⁴⁶ Another asserted that Negroes had built a dozen homes on the outskirts of Danville in 1872. In the next year, a realty agent reported that he had sold thirty-six homes to Negroes of Norfolk since April 1871.⁴⁷ In 1874, the *Whig* estimated that the Richmond Negroes paid about \$3,000 in taxes on real estate principally undeveloped lots in an outlying district. According to this journal, the Negro paying the highest tax was assessed on real and personal property valued at \$2,424. However, in 1873, the *Whig* reported that John Adams, a Negro plasterer, had amassed a fortune of practically \$30,000; but the journal did not state what part Adams had invested in Richmond real estate.⁴⁸

During the reconstruction, moreover, public officials did

^{43b} J. S. Russell, *The Southern Missioner*, 43-45; and *Rural Economic Progress of the Negro in Virginia* in *Journal of Negro History*, XI, No. 4.

⁴⁴ *Annual Reports, Report of Virginia State Auditor*, 1891, Table 30.

⁴⁵ *Eleventh Census*, 1890, Volume of *Farms and Homes: Proprietorship and Indebtedness*, 570.

⁴⁶ In a letter of Judge J. W. Underwood to William Syphax. Published in the *Alexandria Gazette*, July 18, 1865.

⁴⁷ *American Missionary*, January 1873, 2.

⁴⁸ *Whig*, January 16, 1873.

not specify either the amount or value of urban realty owned by Negroes. But the United States Census for 1890 distinguished between the owners of farms and of homes, stating that 16,210 Negro families owned homes in Virginia. Yet it is certain that many such families owned rural homes not classified as farm homes. In nine cities of the State having a population of 8,000 and over, the total number of all home owners was 10,182. In 1891, however, according to the State Auditor's report, Negroes in sixteen cities owned real estate of the assessed value of \$3,206,709. According to this document, moreover, Negroes in the State owned real estate assessed at the value of \$8,992,514. On this they were assessed with a tax of \$35,652.49. At the same time, the personal property of Negroes was assessed at \$3,094,451, bearing a tax levy of \$12,516.68. For purpose of taxation, therefore, the total wealth of the Negroes was \$12,089,965.⁴⁹

The subjoined table shows the assessed value of real estate owned by Negroes of sixteen cities in 1891.

TABLE V: REAL ESTATE OWNED BY VIRGINIA URBAN NEGROES IN 1891⁵⁰

Cities	Assessed Value of Real Estate Owned
Alexandria.....	\$ 168,515
Bristol.....	24,800
Charlottesville.....	103,035
Danville.....	194,171
Fredericksburg.....	59,170
Lynchburg.....	425,908
Manchester (South Richmond).....	178,564
Norfolk.....	232,250
North Danville.....	24,400
Petersburg.....	440,840
Portsmouth.....	87,100
Richmond.....	968,736
Roanoke.....	141,150
Staunton.....	59,950
Williamsburg.....	26,655
Winchester.....	71,825
Total.....	\$3,207,069

In the meantime, while the skilled workmen proved their capacity, other Negroes forged ahead gradually in business.

⁴⁹ *Eleventh Census, 1890, Volume of Farms and Homes: Proprietorship and Indebtedness; Annual Reports, Report of the State Auditor, 1891, Tables 29, 30, 31.*

⁵⁰ Taken from *Report of State Auditor, 1891, Table 30.*

According to reports of the public press and other observers, the Negroes rapidly developed small business enterprises. These were principally restaurants, stores, and barber shops, exclusively controlled by individual proprietors. Among these, too, there were successful hackmen, like Dr. Walter H. Brooks' father, Albert R. Brooks, who did a creditable business of sufficient income to maintain his family independently and give his children a college education. On the other hand, the Negro group began to produce real estate dealers, undertakers, contractors and a number of publishers.⁵¹ Among the latter came some years later John Mitchell, Jr., editor of the *Richmond Planet*, one of the most influential Negro journals in Virginia. Other newspapers published in the interests of the Negroes were the *Peoples Advocate* of Alexandria, the *Virginia Star*, and the *Criterion*.

In addition to these enterprises, however, the Negroes commenced several requiring a high degree of cooperation. At least two of these are worthy of mention. In 1869, according to the *Whig*, the M. R. DeMortie Company established a sassafras oil factory in Richmond. In two years, the factory employed seven or eight "hands," and operated machinery of the productive capacity of 40,000 pounds of sassafras root a week.⁵² About a decade later the Negroes organized the Mount Alto Mining and Land Company of Virginia. The company was incorporated under the laws of Virginia, and authorized to deal in real estate including farm, timber, and mineral lands, with the provision that the amount held at any moment should not exceed 100,000 acres. The authorized capital of the company should not be smaller than \$5,000, nor greater than \$500,000. The incorporators were prominent Richmond men including W. C. Roane, D. M. Steward and P. H. Woolfolk. In 1880, the corporation commenced business as the pioneer in a field widely developed during the following decades.⁵³

⁵¹ *Enquirer*, August 7 and 17, 1867, and the *Dispatch*, September 14, 1874, August 18, 1876, September 20, 1879; *Annual Reports, Report of State Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1871, 117-118; Saunders, *Through the Light Continent*, 76.

⁵² *Whig*, August 4, 1871.

⁵³ *Dispatch*, Feb. 11, 1880.

CHAPTER VIII

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION

Educational forces exerted a potent influence in the development of the freedmen. Readjustment through education began as soon as the Federal authority was re-established over portions of southeastern Virginia. As the Union armies advanced secessionists retired from territory which became available for the colonization of fleeing blacks. Prompted by this opportunity, thousands of escaping slaves made their way to such places as Yorktown, Hampton, Fortress Monroe, Suffolk, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Craney Island.¹ In the absence of any national policy of dealing with the refugees, General B. F. Butler, commanding the Department of Virginia, pronounced those within his jurisdiction "contraband of war." Butler thus prepared the way for relief and schools from the North.

Immediately, the American Missionary Association interested itself in the refugees. On August 3, 1861, Lewis Tappan, the treasurer of the Association, wrote to General Butler, "making inquiries and suggestions as to means of relief." One week later, General Butler replied, "showing the necessity for the colored people to remain South, and welcoming any effort in their behalf."² In response to this communication, the Association commissioned L. C. Lockwood as a missionary and sent him to the field. Arriving at Hampton on September 3, 1861, Lockwood obtained from the United States officer in charge the endorsement of his plans, and the authority to commence his work immediately. Lockwood quickly organized several Sabbath Schools, the first one opening in the home of former President Tyler, on September 15, 1861.³

¹ Report of the Committee of Representatives of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends upon the Condition and Wants of Colored Refugees, 1862, 1.

² History of the American Missionary Association, 11-12.

³ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

On September 17, 1861, there occurred an event of paramount importance. There, near the coast, where two hundred and forty-one years before the first African slave landed in America, the first day school for freedmen was opened. The first teacher of this school was Mrs. Mary S. Peake, an intelligent, Christian woman of color. Educated in Alexandria when that city was a part of the District of Columbia, Mrs. Peake was well equipped for her work. For a few months prior to her loss of health, she taught the school with great success, thereby justifying her selection as the first teacher of the first day school for freedmen in America.⁴

This school was followed by the establishment of others. In 1862, the Association extended its activities in and near Hampton. It opened a school in the deserted and partly burned court-house at Hampton. It founded one school at Norfolk, and two schools at Newport News, and established others at Yorktown, Mill Creek, Portsmouth and Suffolk. In 1863, moreover, after the proclamation of emancipation had been issued, the Association extended its work in Norfolk. In April, schools were commenced in two colored churches. At the first session of the day school, held in one of the churches, some 350 pupils enrolled, followed by 300 others at night. The attendance rapidly increased to 1,200 day students. Fifteen colored assistants were engaged to aid the teachers. At Portsmouth, the schools were enlarged, and on many abandoned plantations in the vicinity of Norfolk, occupied by Negroes, schools were opened. One started on the estate of former Governor Henry A. Wise.⁵

Somewhat later such relief agencies as the Boston Educational Society, the National Freedmen's Relief Association and the Society of Friends commenced work in Virginia. These societies operated chiefly in Norfolk, Yorktown, and Hampton, prior to the fall of Richmond, when their teachers opened schools in that city.⁶ Referring to the aims of these

⁴ *History of the American Missionary Association*, 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14, 15; *American Missionary*, September, 1871, 196.

⁶ *Report Executive Board Friends Association*, April 1864, 12; *History American Missionary Association*, 17; *American Missionary*, July 1867, 163; *Freedmen's Record*, 1865.

pioneer teachers, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society said: "They are expected to give instruction in those arts of civilized life which the negro needs quite as much as book learning. Lessons of industry, of domestic management and thrift, lessons of truth and honesty, lessons which may help their pupils (children and adults) to unlearn the teachings of slavery—these make a part of the system of education which our New England men and women are striving to introduce into our Southern States." ⁷

Referring to the extent of the work during the last year of the War, R. M. Manly said that "colored regiments which remained in camp for any length of time had regimental schools under the direction of the chaplain, with such assistants as he needed. The attendance was voluntary, but embraced most of the young men; the assistant teachers were provided by charitable associations of the North. The soldiers clubbed their efforts and built a rude school-house, which served also for prayer-meetings, and for preaching services in bad weather. Such schools were numerous at Alexandria, Fortress Monroe, Hampton, Norfolk, and Portsmouth. In these places and in the country immediately adjacent, the negro children were quite fully provided with teachers. Negro churches, disused barrack-buildings and abandoned dwelling houses supplied school-rooms. During the twelve months preceding the close of the war, there must have been as many as three or four thousand children under daily instruction in these schools." ⁸

A great development of the work took place after the War ended. The Freedmen's Bureau assumed the general control of educational activities, and contributed to their success, by erecting some buildings, renting and repairing others, and supplying the schools with furniture. Schools for freedmen were opened in all parts of the State, including Richmond where teachers had not entered during the war. Teachers

⁷ *Second Annual Report of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society*, published in the *Freedmen's Record*, April 1865, 49.

⁸ *Annual Reports, Tenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1880), 129. R. M. Manly was the Superintendent of Colored Schools in Virginia under the Freedmen's Bureau. See also *Enquirer*, April 15, 1867.

were commissioned and paid chiefly by Northern relief associations. These included the New York Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, the New England Branch of the same agency, the American Missionary Association, the Philadelphia Friends, and the missionary societies in the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches. In 1865, two hundred such teachers engaged in the instruction of nearly 13,000 pupils.⁹

For the next five years, the Freedmen's Bureau exercised general control over these schools. School superintendents for each State were appointed by the Bureau on July 12, 1865. The appointee in Virginia was R. M. Manly. In September, 1865, a General Superintendent or Inspector of all the freedmen schools was appointed. From the reports of this officer, the history and development of the freedmen's schools in Virginia may be readily traced.

In the first semi-annual report, submitted in January, 1866, John W. Alvord, the General Superintendent of Freedmen's Schools, said of Virginia: "The best schools in this State are at Hampton and Norfolk, and the adjacent plantations, where the field could be occupied soon after the war commenced. Attainment in all branches of a common education has been most commendable, and no abatement of zeal or slackening of progress is apparent among scholars most advanced. The higher classes are destined to go still higher if opportunity is afforded them."¹⁰ "In other parts of Virginia," continued the report, "these educational efforts have commenced more recently, but with equal promise. By the efforts of your excellent Assistant Commissioner at Richmond, schools, in their first stages, are now instituted in all parts of the State."¹¹ According to the report there were in the State ninety schools in which one hundred ninety-five teachers instructed 12,898 children.¹²

The second report submitted in July, 1866, outlined some of the problems met in educating the Negroes. The document

⁹ *Annual Reports*, etc., 129-130.

¹⁰ Alvord, *Report on Freedmen's Schools*, January, 1866, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

states that "the whole field of education in the State of Virginia has been gradually enlarging, and schools are demanded in new localities. Some of the better class of white citizens favor the elevation of the negro, and a considerable number of earnest calls have been made by them for teachers and books. Only a portion of these, however, could be met, from lack of means in the hands of the benevolent associations; and the controlling classes of the State have neither the disposition nor the ability to undertake any part of this work, beyond a very little in Sunday-schools. It may be said that no practical sympathy or assistance from citizens is to be looked for at present in educating the freedman, though the religious conventions of the State have passed resolutions acknowledging it to be their duty." ¹³

Despite the obstacles to the education of the freedmen thus early encountered, progress was gradually made. David Thomas, who toured the country during the years 1865 and 1866 gives such testimony in the following:—"Visited a school under the management of Miss Howe. There are about 400 children taught here, and although the school was only commenced in October last, the children have made very rapid progress. They could say from memory the multiplication table, backward and forward, could spell words of five or six syllables, could answer questions in geography quite correctly, could sing beautifully, and Miss Howe, who had been a teacher in the State of Maine, said she never knew children in the North learn so fast as the coloured children did in Richmond. I heard some of the children read very well indeed. I visited another school under the management of Miss Hancock, and I never saw children equally advanced who had had so little training. A negro man was writing his first copy book, and he did it very nicely indeed. I also visited the Ebenezer Baptist School where there were about 400 children taught, and here, as at other places, there was a perfect race for learning, all appearing to be doing their very best." ¹⁴

The school report for January, 1867, stated that "public

¹³ Alvord, *Report on Freedmen's Schools*, July, 1866, 4.

¹⁴ Thomas, *My American Tour*, 199.

sentiment against the education of the freedmen is being gradually overcome.”¹⁵ In this respect, further improvement was noted, according to the January report of 1868: That document said: “The most conclusive evidence of a change of public sentiment for the better is found in the fact that applications from native Virginians, of respectable social position, for employment as teachers in the colored schools are becoming common, and a considerable number of this class have established schools for freedmen in different parts of the State; in some instances with the assistance of the bureau and in others, independent of it.”¹⁶ Yet the July report of 1868 spoke of unusual hostility to freedmen’s schools during the preceding months, partly due to the political contest in the State, and partly to a general dislike of the public school system proposed for Virginia.¹⁷

Nevertheless progress in education continued. For this, the freedmen themselves were not a little responsible. In rural localities they liberally contributed their labor, and sometimes money and material in the erection of school houses.¹⁸ David Thomas, just referred to above, said he attended a concert at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Richmond, given to raise funds for the erection of a Negro school. “It was believed that the school would get burned down if erected,” said he, “but they were disposed to go on with the erection.”¹⁹

Freedmen voluntarily undertook the support of some schools which, together with increased help of the Federal Government, constituted the main factor in the support of the system in 1867. In this year, the freedmen contributed to the support of 155 schools, and sustained 68 completely. In communities requiring tuition, parents paid sums varying from 10 cents to 50 cents weekly, and aggregating \$12,286.50 in 1870. In 1870, they contributed to the support of 215 schools, and owned 111 buildings.²⁰

¹⁵ Alvord, *Report on Freedmen’s Schools*, January, 1867, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, January, 1868, 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, July, 1868, 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, July, 1869, 22.

¹⁹ Thomas, *My American Tour*, 199. See also the *Euquirer*, Oct. 12, 1867.

²⁰ Alvord, *Report on Freedmen’s Schools*, July, 1870, 12, 21.

In the same year, when Federal supervision of the schools was withdrawn, there were over 18,000 pupils and 412 teachers in Virginia. Referring to the latter, R. M. Manly said in 1880: "Time enough has passed for a dispassionate judgment of the temper, spirit, and professional skill of these workers—the teachers from the North. There was some drift-wood and a few pieces of rotten-wood. This was to be expected where the executive officers of the Association were sending hundreds of teachers, received on recommendation, to all parts of the South. But poor material or indifferent material was in very small proportion to the whole. And there was much of the best work I ever saw done. The young ladies were, in many cases, from homes of affluence and refinement and the highest Christian principle. I doubt if there is better teaching or better discipline in any school in this land than my assistant teachers did for me in my normal school during its first six years."²¹

The results of nine years of instruction are interesting to us here. From the standpoint of mental development, the General Superintendent's report of July, 1868, stated that approximately 50,000 colored people had learned to read; that some of the earlier pupils were in college, and others in a course of preparation; and that many were usefully employed as teachers.²² Writing in 1880, R. M. Manly said that not less than 20,000 had learned to read between 1865 and 1870. Some of these became good scholars and some excellent teachers.²³ But certain social results of this instruction were of paramount importance. Writing from this standpoint in 1869, R. M. Manly said: "The schools have been the principal cause of the hopefulness and patience with which the freedmen have endured the hunger, the nakedness, and the unavenged wrongs of their transitional state. Their churches have been great gainers in the increasing demand for ministers of better qualifications, and in softening the extravagances of their old form of worship. The schools have also

²¹ *Annual Reports, Tenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (1880), 130.

²² Alvord, *Reports of Freedmen's Schools*, July, 1868, 16.

²³ *Annual Reports, Tenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 130.

developed self-respect, and a general desire for permanent homes and the comforts and decencies of social life.”²⁴ According to the Superintendent’s report of January, 1870, moreover, despite the heavy drinking of colored people in keeping with the custom of the country, a decline in the use of intoxicants was noted even during the preceding Christmas holidays.²⁵

Yet the increasing needs of instruction were felt at the very time the Federal Government was withdrawing aid. These charity schools of the Freedmen’s Bureau and non-sectarian religious bodies had reached only a small percentage of the Negro school population. Referring to conditions in Eastern Virginia, General Armstrong said: “They do not maintain ten common schools in a colored population of 100,000; all that has been done is as a drop in the bucket. The local patronage of influential white men, or white and colored united, amounts to nothing in this section of the State.”²⁶ In Norfolk, Mr. Percy of the Freedmen’s Bank there, said: “The children are too far advanced to attend schools taught by ‘native teachers’ (meaning negro teachers), and should the Northern teachers now retire from the field the only result we can foresee is a relapse into a condition of intelligence little better than before the schools opened.”²⁷

Reviewing the efforts of the Federal Government to educate the Negroes prior to 1871, W. H. Ruffner, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia, said that they “could not have been designed as anything more than an experiment intended first to test and then to stimulate the appetite of these people for learning. And in this view they were entirely successful in both particulars; for the children flocked to the schools, attended well, made good progress in knowledge and paid a surprising amount of money for tuition.” But, considered as a serious attempt to educate the freedmen, Ruffner regarded the movement wholly inadequate even when contrasted with the imperfect State system. The largest

²⁴ Alvord, *Reports of Freedmen’s Schools*, July, 1869, 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, January, 1870, 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, July, 1870, 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, July, 1870, 12.

number enrolled under the federal system was 18,234 in 1870, but this was smaller than half the number of Negroes enrolled in the public schools in 1871.²⁸

The establishment of the public school system in Virginia was an important factor in the rehabilitation of the State. The aristocratic whites had never been favorably disposed to education at public expense. Their attitude was that inasmuch as the rich man was able to educate his children in private institutions of learning, it was unjust to tax his property for the education of the children of the poor in charity schools. The Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868 was composed of men, some of whom had come from States where public education had been popularized, of twenty-five Negroes, and of some middle class whites, all anxious to educate their children at the expense of the commonwealth. This body, therefore, had an attitude decidedly different from that of former "sovereigns" and provided accordingly for a public school system.²⁹

Although this purpose was stoutly contested by the reactionary minority traditionally opposed to democratic education, the constitution adopted provided for a uniform sys-

²⁸ *Annual Reports, Tenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1880, p. 132.

²⁹ In 1870 Somers said: "The Radical party of the State take credit for having opened schools in Richmond immediately after the war for the education of negro children. They say that from 5,000 to 6,000 were thus brought under instruction, and that the consequence now is that black children can read and write, while many of the white children are untaught. There has been no school assessment hitherto in Virginia, but the Constitution under the Act of Reconstruction requires free schools to be established by assessment over the whole state, and this provision is being carried out with the assent of all parties. The city of Richmond has already appropriated 100,000 dollars for education. The practice is to have separate schools for the negroes. I have been shown a large building in what was not long ago the fashionable quarter of the town, and then used as a grand hotel, which has been purchased for conversion into a free school for the negroes, and in magnitude will vie with the splendid free schools of New York or Philadelphia. Seeing that buildings have to be provided, and that there are no reserved lands, as in the Western States, for the aid of common school education, the school-rate in Virginia will be pretty high for some time; but it will be a source of much profit in the end, and will make her labour more valuable, and her wide domains more attractive and more pleasant to settlers of every class." Somers, *The Southern States since the War*, 19-20.

tem of public free schools to be established not later than 1876. The constitution further required the General Assembly to provide for the free school system by law. On July 6, 1869, the electorate ratified the instrument including the provision for free education by a majority of 201,449 votes.³⁰

When Virginia reëntered the Union in 1870, however, reactionaries controlled both houses of the General Assembly. The majority proved a bit lukewarm on public education. Nevertheless, the body quickly provided in some fashion for the establishment of public free schools. It immediately appointed as Superintendent of Public Instruction, W. H. Ruffner, who drew up a plan which with a few changes was adopted. The school law opened the common schools to all children in Virginia between the ages of five and twenty-one years, but provided separate schools for the races in contradistinction to the article of the constitution on education, which made no such discrimination. School funds were to be obtained from a capitation tax of one dollar assessed on eligible males, a property tax of ten to fifty cents on the \$100 valuation and the income from the Literary Fund. Additional assessment on property not to exceed fifty cents on the \$100 might be made in northern counties and districts.

The law was approved on July 11, 1870, after which Ruffner proceeded with his duties thereunder. The first schools were opened about the middle of November. The work then moved forward as rapidly as conditions permitted. Before the end of the school year the system embraced more than 2,900 schools, with about 130,000 pupils, and more than 3,000 teachers. The number of schools for Negroes reached 706; the number of pupils enrolled, 38,554; and the average daily attendance, 23,452, or 23.4 per cent of the school population enrolled.³¹

The *Educational Journal* for the month of January, 1871, gave the following account of the work up to that time: "The public school work moves on with a vigor which is

³⁰ Constitution of 1867—Article VIII, Sections I and II, Journal, House of Delegates, 1869-1870, 610.

³¹ *Annual Reports, First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 173.

surprising in view of the fact that not a dollar of the public money has yet become available for the support of the system (Jan. 10). Except in one district, in which the colored people voted adversely, the question of laying a local tax for providing school accommodations has been carried by a large majority in every case in which it has been presented to the suffrages of the people. In one large and wealthy district in Henrico county, the colored people, who are in the majority, left the question of the school tax to be entirely decided by the whites, who were the property-holders. Not a colored vote was cast on the question, and the whites unanimously voted the tax of over sixteen hundred dollars. The polls were opened in all the districts, and only eighteen votes were cast against the tax in the county. In Alexandria, Rockbridge, and Powhatan, the result was highly favorable, the adverse vote being very small. But the machinery of the polls has been resorted to in only a few cases hitherto. In more than one-fourth, perhaps in one-half of the counties of the State, schools have been opened, or are on the point of opening, by means of private subscription. And a large proportion of these schools have heretofore existed as private schools, which, by the concurrence of those concerned, have now been adopted into the State system, and made free to all. In many cases the teacher continues to receive pay from his patrons, in addition to what he receives from the State. By this combination of private with public means, schools in some counties are likely to be so multiplied as to furnish a full supply for the wants of the people. Augusta, Rockbridge, Carroll, Floyd and Chesterfield, are examples of this. What has been done in these counties might be done in many others. In one of our smaller cities all the elementary private schools—eight in number—have been turned into public schools, and an appropriation of fifteen hundred dollars has been made by the city council for their benefit. In nearly all the counties in which private arrangements have not been made, district votes will be taken during this month.”³²

During the first year of public free school system, the best schools for Negroes were maintained in Norfolk, Petersburg

³² *Report*, 1871, pp. 5-6.

and Richmond. In Norfolk, a free school system had been established prior to the War, but Negroes were not admitted to the benefits thereof until 1870. In Petersburg, a general system of public schools was commenced in 1868. In Richmond, the system was introduced in 1869. Each city made liberal provisions for the operation of free common schools assisted by contributions from the Peabody Education Fund, established by a wealthy Northerner interested in Southern education. During the year 1870-1871, there were enrolled in Norfolk 865 pupils, white and Negro; in the Petersburg schools, 2,661; and in the Richmond schools, 3,300. The Richmond schools were made a part of the State system in April, 1871.³³

The public schools, however, did not immediately progress very rapidly. The system was unable to produce all of the results required of it. The largest factor contributing to their inefficiency was the lack of funds. After four years of exhausting war the State was too poverty stricken to pay sufficient taxes for the construction of school houses, the employment of well-qualified teachers, and the purchase of essential equipment.³⁴ Furthermore, the public school system failed to attract the children of the once affluent but now indigent aristocratic because of the stigma attached to charity schools. The rich had formerly thought of such an act as depriving the poor of alms belonging to that particular class. The poor whites, moreover, had little appreciation of the meaning of popular education and did not at first attend the public schools in large numbers. A Pittsylvania Correspondent of the *Enquirer*, whose letter appeared January 30, 1869, reported a case in evidence. He said that there were hundreds of children in that county, some of them almost grown up persons, who were neither able to read nor write, and instead of their parents sending them to school, they were buying whiskey and would not pay their debts. He expressed the opinion, too, that this unfortunate condition obtained in other counties.³⁵

³³ *Report*, 1871, pp. 16-21.

³⁴ *Dispatch*, July 14, 1870.

³⁵ *Enquirer*, Jan. 30, 1869.

The Negroes as a majority, however, appreciated the public schools and attended in large numbers. They welcomed this as an opportunity long withheld but now offered to all. From various parts of the State there came numerous reports to this effect together with a complaint that the whites themselves did not have the same appreciation. Observing this difference David Macrae writing in 1870 said: "It is a habit amongst white people to look down upon the blacks; but it would be interesting to know how many uneducated adults in England, Scotland, Ireland—white people though they be—are striving, as the negroes in those night schools are doing, to make up for the educational deficiencies of early years! Amongst the lowest classes of whites of the South, who are almost as illiterate as the negroes, I wish I could have seen a tithe of the same desire for self-improvement." ³⁶

A correspondent from James City County said in his letter published in the *Dispatch*, March 8, 1871: "The free schools are in full blast in our county, and great excitement prevails among the colored race. Young and old, little and big, seem eager to obtain knowledge. The colored schools are brimful. In one school an assistant had to be called in to help teach, not only the young and single, but married Africans how to shoot. On the other hand the white schools are poorly attended and doubtless will not be a success this season." ³⁷

Referring to the progress and prosperity of the school system a correspondent from Prince Edward County said in a letter appearing in the *Enquirer*, January 3, 1871: "The negroes have indicated a commendable zeal for securing the benefits of these public schools. Every colored school is crowded, and instead of the numbers decreasing they have increased with the progress of time and the superintendent stated that, contrary to his expectation, there was not only an increase in numbers, but the progress of the pupils had

³⁶ David Macrae, *The Americans at Home*, II, 66. See also *Dispatch*, Feb. 7, March 9, July 1, 1871; Oct. 6, 1873; Feb. 26, 1874; April 26, 1875; June 13, 1878.

³⁷ *Enquirer*, March 8, 1871.

been uniformly of the most encouraging character. Certainly to an Old Virginian, of Southside birth and intensely old Virginia sentiments," said he further, "the sight of these crowded schoolrooms of blacks from six years old to twenty—the predominating age averaging about ten—is one of the most patent evidences that we are in the midst of a revolution. It is in vain to quarrel with the facts or resist the logic of events. After all through which we have passed, as a people, our wisdom is to 'accept the situation' and make the best of it. We had better mount the car and endeavor to control the engine. Who knows to what all these changes will lead? Let us do the duty of the hour and patiently and hopefully wait the orderings of a wise Providence." ³⁸

The thinking whites of the State were far from having an attitude of indifference to the public schools. Through editorials and addresses they repeatedly urged the people to take advantage of the unusual opportunity for popular education.³⁹ Be it said to their credit, moreover, they were not only urging this upon the whites but also upon the Negroes. In fact, because of the scarcity of Negroes qualified to teach there was offered an unusual opportunity for social uplift of the freedmen of which many Virginia ladies and gentlemen availed themselves. In fact, in the beginning the majority of the teachers in the Negro schools of some counties were whites.⁴⁰ On August 3, 1867, the *Enquirer* reported 182 white teachers in the 90 Negro schools of the State.⁴¹ Most of these, of course, were from the North.

Some of these cases are interesting. One of the most efficient teachers of Negroes in Buckingham County just after the War was the son of Colonel Joseph Fuqua who distinguished himself in the army of the Confederates.⁴² The *Enquirer*, of August 17, 1866, even before the inauguration of the public school system, reported that a Southern gentleman had established a school at Charlotte Court House for the

³⁸ *Enquirer*, Jan. 3, 1871.

³⁹ *Enquirer*, July 29, 1867.

⁴⁰ *Dispatch*, March 9, 1871, April 26, 1875.

⁴¹ *Enquirer*, Aug. 3, 1867.

⁴² Statement made by Dr. Woodson who lived in that county.

instruction of Negro children.⁴³ On March 23, 1867, there appeared in the *Enquirer* an item from the *Norfolk Journal* to the effect that Rev. Thomas Hume, Sr., "a long time interested in the promotion of the free schools of Norfolk and now not permitting color to set a limit to his exertions," was promoting the education of colored people.⁴⁴

The editor of the Petersburg *Index* is quoted as having said: "They will be taught. It is impossible for them to remain in the state of ignorance in which emancipation found them. Either we of the South must aid them in their moral advance, or the work will be undertaken by strangers and enemies, who will seek to alienate them from us, and use them as a power to perpetuate our political degradation. Without any action on our part they have become enfranchised, and their weight will hereafter be felt at the polls. It is to our interest, as well as for their own, that their minds should be enlightened so that they may be enabled to use the suffrage bestowed upon them by Congress in a proper manner. So far since freedom has been thrust upon them, they, as a class, have conducted themselves remarkably well. The feeling existing between them and the whites has been of a kindly nature, and it will be the fault of the latter, if they permit outsiders to come in and destroy it. Evidently the welfare of all concerned demands that the superior race should use all proper means for the education and moral improvement of the freedmen."⁴⁵

Having this new idea with respect to the duty of the white man in directing the Negro in the way that the former believed that he should go, there was no stigma attached to the whites teaching Negro schools. In some cases they seemed to take pride in this work. For example, a correspondent from Lancaster Court House wrote on February 25, 1871: "The first white man in the country that has received a certificate from the superintendent of public schools to teach in any of the primary schools has accepted the charge of the colored school at this place. Thus our northern friends (ironically)

⁴³ *Enquirer*, Aug. 17, 1866.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, March 23, 1867.

⁴⁵ *Enquirer*, March 23, 1867.

will see that as cruel and malicious as we are, we have enough of the Old Virginia Honor left to induce us to use our pecuniary and mental means to help those who are unable to help themselves." ⁴⁶

In the *Dispatch*, April 11, 1875, there appeared from Petersburg the following: "Major Giles B. Cook, who was a member of the staff of General Robert E. Lee during the war, and who since its close has interested himself very earnestly in the education of colored children (having recently established a school for them under his special charge), will leave at an early date for England for the purpose of eliciting interest in his enterprise in that country and securing substantial assistance for it." ⁴⁷ This was the St. Stephen's School which for many years Major Cook directed to the satisfaction of both races. Rev. J. S. Attwell, a rector of the Episcopal Church, served in connection with this institution a number of years and then went to Savannah, Georgia. In this institution were trained a number of useful men like Mr. Wm. Shields, Principal of the Peabody High School, and Dr. James S. Russell, of the St. Paul Industrial School. ⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Dispatch*, Mar. 3, 1871.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1873.

⁴⁸ *Dispatch*, June 30, Dec. 20, 1879.

CHAPTER IX

PROGRESS IN MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

In its second year the public school system registered more progress. Commenting upon results, Ruffner stated that the colored people continued to manifest a desire for education, according to the statistics and reports submitted by county school officers and teachers. The general average for school attendance was nearly as good as that of the whites; and in many counties, the average attendance record of the Negroes was better. On the other hand, the number of Negro schools was not as large as the white, in proportion to the population. Commenting thereon, Ruffner said: "It is possible that in rare cases an unjust discrimination was made against the colored people, and yet I have no sufficient proof that such was the fact in any case. I feel satisfied that the prevailing disposition among school officers was to discharge their duties without partiality and without hypocrisy."¹

Ruffner thought that the relative disparity in the number of schools might be ascribed mainly to the want of a sufficient number of teachers and of school houses for Negro schools. The difficulty of procuring suitable school houses was a serious hindrance to the progress of education among the blacks. The district money bore a small proportion to public necessities. Thus school accommodations were largely obtained by the use of old school houses, or by private subscriptions. These circumstances often gave advantages to the whites when no injustice was meant. On the other hand, great difficulty was found in obtaining competent teachers for Negro schools. Whites taught Negro schools in the cities, but the rural schools were mainly taught by Negroes. These were often incompetent. Yet the recently established normal schools were turning out good teachers. Educated Negro

¹ *Report*, 1872, 2.

teachers were becoming numerous, and the average ability of the teachers of Negro schools was rising.²

At this time, moreover, most of the whites did not oppose Negro education vigorously. In his report of 1872, Ruffner said: "It is pleasant to observe that our intelligent citizens are becoming more and more favorable to the education of the negro."³ Yet, within two years, a radical change in this sentiment was threatened. This resulted from the Civil Rights bill which, in its early form, prohibited the segregation of the races in public schools. Sentiment throughout the State was strongly opposed to mixed schools.⁴ The superintendent, himself, argued strongly against enforcing equality between the whites and blacks in the public schools. Ruffner regarded separate education best for the Negro, and based his conclusion on the principle "that the degraded and injurious classes of children should be separated from the bulk of society, and be subjected to a special training." . . . "It is on this principle," said he, "the education of the colored people should be conducted," for "they require special training in the simplest maxims and habits of civilized society. They need fifty years of training in ideas to which white children may be said to be born."⁵ The excitement subsided when the Civil Rights measure as finally drafted made no attempt to enforce mixed schools. But the system was still inadequate.

Edward King, who studied the situation of the Negroes in 1873, said: "In the back counties it will be found difficult to establish the free common school on a good and reliable basis; but, certainly, both whites and blacks enjoy excellent school facilities in most of the larger towns. A careful canvass of the counties in South-western Virginia, and the Piedmont district, in 1872, shows that, while there was still some marked opposition to the free public school, the sentiment of the mass was gradually becoming favorable to it.

"There has never been, since the war, any inclination on

² *Report*, 1872, 2.

³ *Report*, 1872, 2. See also *Enquirer*, Oct. 30, Nov. 28, 1871.

⁴ *Report*, 1874, 42-51; *Virginia Press*, 1874.

⁵ *Report*, 1874, 154.

the part of the whites to hinder the negro from getting as much education as he can himself pay for; and, although some resistance to the collection of taxes for school purposes was anticipated at the time the system went into operation, in 1870, there never has been any worthy of the name. The negroes in many of the counties manifest more eagerness to enter school than do the whites, but they are not always willing to pay something to support the school. On the whole, great progress has been made; the Peabody fund has done, and still does good work in Bristol, Abingdon, Marion, Salem, Wytheville and Lynchburg; the number of school edifices is increasing, and good teachers are more readily procured than at the outset. The mass of the people throughout that region, as in other parts of Virginia, would, I think, prefer that the Legislature should take the responsibility of raising the funds to support the schools. At present the supervisors and judges in each county have the power to regulate the local school taxes, and the result of this is that the school trustees, who are required by law to provide good school edifices for the pupils, have not the money with which to build them. But experience and improved sentiment are gradually regulating all these matters.”⁶

Referring especially to Petersburg, King said: “The Petersburg schools are noteworthy examples of Virginian progress since the war, and merit the warmest encomiums. No attempt has been made by black or white to insist upon the education of the races together, it being tacitly allowed on both sides that it would not be wise. Petersburg’s general free system of public schools was founded in 1868, when \$2,000 of the “Peabody Fund” was contributed, on condition that the city should raise \$20,000 and with it establish schools for all classes and colors. By the second year nearly 3,000 pupils were enrolled, and both whites and blacks are now given all facilities for a thorough education. The colored young men have not, as a mass, made any special demand for instruction in the higher branches; their main desire is for a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, and such general study as will enable them to speak in public or to preach; but the

⁶ King, *The Great South*, 574–575.

girls in many of the negro schools are capable of mastering Caesar, and can write correct French exercises.”⁷

Opposition to the public school system in some form, however, continued. This was closely connected with the question of the payment of the State debt, which amounted approximately to \$45,000,000 in 1870. Commencing in that year, public officials diverted to the payment of the public debt some of the tax returns designed for school purposes. Superintendent Ruffner referred to this diversion of school funds in his report for 1876, and again in 1878 when the situation had become alarming. Taking up the question Ruffner said: “The diversion of school funds, complained of in my last report, has increased. Previously, we had lost at the rate of about \$80,000 annually, but last year over \$250,000 of school money was used for other purposes. The result, of course, is a breaking down of the school system.”⁸ In 1879, conditions grew worse. Many schools were compelled to close for lack of funds. The enrollment of Negro pupils had decreased in one year from 61,772 to 35,768. Among the whites the decrease was from 140,472 to 72,306. Relief came in 1882, when, on the question of the distribution of \$400,000 obtained from the sale of the State’s interests in the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Board of Education.

How far the diversion of funds affected the interests of Negroes adversely it is difficult to state. Judging from the actions of local school boards, during the period from 1871 to 1880, one would think that had there been no diversion the disparity in the apportionment of schools might have been greater. Statistics show that the whites had three schools to one for the Negro, yet the ratio of school population was smaller than two to one in favor of the whites. In 1880, Superintendent Ruffner reluctantly conceded that some of the boards had “not been able to rise to the height of that impartial justice which the law requires.”⁹ But his successor, R. R. Farr, stated that “the great discrepancy between the per cent of white and

⁷ King, *The Great South*, 581–582.

⁸ *Report*, 1878, pp. 5–6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1880, pp. 127–128.

colored enrollment is readily accounted for. Because the whites have been provided with a fair proportion of schools to their school population, the blacks have not."¹⁰

With the increasing interest of the Negroes in education, however, the school became a social center for the race in competition with the church. Most of the parents who had been denied the opportunity for education themselves took pride in visiting the schools to hear their children spell and read. The public exercises of these schools and especially those closing the terms usually attracted almost everybody in the community. They were all eager to hear the essays, declamations, and recitations of these developing youth.¹¹ So popular became education among the Negroes that parents who kept their children at home to work were generally branded as unworthy citizens.

Negro teachers as they developed in knowledge and appreciation of higher things, moreover, put forth organized effort for the general improvement of their schools.¹² In 1867 the freedmen contributed sufficient funds to build 45 school houses at \$130 each. In other cases they erected schools with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau.¹³ They organized institutes, associations and conventions which met annually to discuss pedagogic questions and to find means for the extension of the system. There was organized in the State in 1875 what is known as the Virginia Educational and Historical Association which met annually in the cities of Virginia for these very purposes. The moving spirit in these beginnings was Mr. John W. Cromwell, who, after being educated in Philadelphia, taught for years in Virginia and later in the District of Columbia. He served this body as president and secretary and in various other capacities. Associated with him were such distinguished Negroes as Rev. James H. Holmes, then pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richmond; Dr. W. B. Derrick, then engaged as the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of that city and later exalted to the bishop-

¹⁰ *Report*, 1882, pp. 58-59.

¹¹ *Enquirer*, July 1, 1871; *Dispatch*, June 13, 1878.

¹² *Enquirer*, July 26, 1866; *Dispatch*, Oct. 12, 1867; Jan. 8, 1876.

¹³ *Enquirer*, Oct. 12, 1867.

ric of that church; and Dr. Walter H. Brooks, then a religious worker and pastor in Virginia and later of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in Washington.¹⁴

The Association was to collect and preserve statistical and historical matters of special interest to the Negro race; to promote the cause of education; "to aid in the instruction of such youths as by their persevering talents and general worth, give promise of usefulness to the State and country; to encourage by the dissemination of useful knowledge the development of scientific and mechanical ideas; and generally to incite the colored race to the highest achievements."¹⁵ Membership in the Association was based upon the payment of an annual fee of one dollar.

In delivering his inaugural address, John W. Cromwell,¹⁶ elected the first president, spoke on the subject of the difficulties under which colored children labored in obtaining an education in Virginia. These Cromwell classified as

¹⁴ *Dispatch*, Aug. 24, 25, 26, 1875; Aug. 18, 1876; Aug. 23, 1878. See also *Dispatch*, Feb. 23, 1872; Aug. 18, 1876.

¹⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, August 25, 1875.

¹⁶ John Wesley Cromwell was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, in 1846. When his father obtained his freedom in 1851 he moved to Philadelphia where young Cromwell was educated in the Institute for Colored Youth under the direction of Ebenezer D. Bassett. He began his career as a teacher at Columbia, Pennsylvania, in 1864. At the close of the year, however, he abandoned this task to open a private school at Portsmouth, Virginia. He then went to work in the employ of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the Colored People. But his school house having been burned and he having been shot, he returned to Virginia in the employ of the American Missionary Association. He began teaching in this capacity at the Providence Church in Norfolk County. Here, says his biographer: "He took an active part in politics and engaged in the grocery business but did not succeed in the latter enterprise and had to give it up." He was a delegate to the First Republican Convention in the State. He spent some time in organizing Republican clubs and councils of the Union League. Mr. Cromwell was impanelled United States juror for the term at which Jefferson Davis was to be tried. He was a clerk in the Constitutional Convention in 1867-1868. In 1869, however, he resumed teaching and organized several schools under the auspices of the Philadelphia Friends. We find him teaching at Withersville in 1869. In 1870 he was principal of a school held in Dill's Bakery in Richmond. In the summer of 1871 he taught a school in Northampton County near the scene of the Nat Turner insurrection. The following year he entered Howard University, Washington, D. C., where he finished the course in law. In the city of Washington he served first in the government service and then in the public schools until 1884. All of his efforts were thereafter restricted to education." See Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 899-901.

financial and moral impediments. The former he discussed in detail, pointing out the inadequacy of State and local support of the public schools, the non-collection of the capitation tax, and the poverty of colored parents. Among the difficulties, he referred to the character and limited supply of teachers for Negro schools, the want of proper spirit with which they engage in the work, and the hostile public opinion in regard to the education of Negro children. The speaker believed that the State Government should meet the necessities of the school system by enforcing the collection of the capitation tax to the extent of making its payment a condition precedent to the exercise of suffrage.¹⁷

Specifically Cromwell said that "certain false and wicked ideas, outgrowths of theories, invented to justify oppression have been so widely spread, and so long unchallenged that their influences have been pernicious in the work of instruction by limiting education, by checking aspirations, and by shutting off opportunities for development and promotion." Because southern white people originated these ideas, Cromwell regarded teachers from that class generally not the best instructors for colored youth. He believed that "the increasing demand for colored teachers suggested the maintenance of efficient normal schools, which, besides giving instruction common to such institutions, should not fail to give proper impressions as to the special work its graduate had to do."¹⁸

The complaint was that whites were not sympathetic and that they treated the Negroes as their inferiors.¹⁹ Dr. Woodson gives the story of Peter Pankey, such a white teacher of Negroes in Buckingham County. He made no effort to instruct the pupils and slept most of the time during school hours. While in this state the children brought in refreshments from the neighborhood and on cold days engaged in parching corn. On arising from his slumber and finding them thus engaged, he never reprimanded their conduct but requested that they share with him the corn they had been parching.²⁰

¹⁷ Richmond *Dispatch* and Richmond *Enquirer*, August 25, 1875.

¹⁸ *Enquirer*, August 25, 1875.

¹⁹ *Dispatch*, March 8, 1875; May 20, 1879.

²⁰ Statement by Dr. C. G. Woodson.

In 1880, then, Negroes earnestly protested the employment of native white persons rather than available Negroes to teach in Negro schools. A considerable number of such teachers had been produced by the St. Stephen's School in Petersburg, the Richmond Normal School, Richmond Institute and Hampton.²¹ In that year, there were 1,256 Negro schools engaging 785 Negro teachers, principally in the rural schools. In Richmond, Negroes taught in only one of four groups of Negro schools. The colored tax payers petitioned the Richmond Public School Board to "appoint colored teachers in all colored public schools of this city, and raise the grade of the same to a level with that of white schools." The petitioners pointed out the availability of Negro teachers, and showed by the statistics of Richmond Public School reports of 1877-1878 that both the scholarship and attendance record were better in the Navy Hill schools taught by Negroes than in the other Negro schools taught by whites. The attendance record of the Navy Hill school was superior to that of any other school, white or black, in the city. The petitioners further showed that the principle of segregation in the schools was defeated by the retention of white teachers; that the Negro teachers of Richmond compared favorably with the whites, and that the expenditures of the Negro in the upkeep of the Richmond school system warranted the expenditure of a reasonable proportion of the fund in employing Negro teachers.²² Never-

²¹ *Enquirer*, Oct. 16, 1868; Oct. 30, 1871; *Dispatch*, Jan. 15, Sept. 25, 1872; June 13, 21, 1873; June 15, 1874; June 17, 1875; May 24, 1878; June 30, Dec. 20, 1879.

²² On this same question Dr. Walter H. Brooks, in an article contributed to the *Virginia Star*, July 24, 1880, went into more detail in discussing this action of the Richmond Board of Education in refusing such a petition. He said:

"The Public School Board of the city of Richmond have refused to grant so much of the petition which was made to them as relates to the employment of colored teachers only, in the colored public schools of this city. In doing this they assume that a sufficient number of competent and acceptable colored teachers cannot be found in Richmond to replace the thirty-two white teachers now teaching in the colored public schools of our city; that a majority of the colored people prefer white teachers to instruct their children; and that white teachers can succeed as well in instructing colored children as colored teachers can.

"No one who examines fairly and fully the argument of the Board, and takes the necessary pains to ascertain the correctness of their statements, will, for a moment, fail to see that their position is utterly untenable. The first

theless, the School Board refused to accede to the petition.²³ The whites were disinclined to vacate these positions in their behalf; for, although poorly paid, they offered as much reassumption of the Board is simply a matter of sheer nonsense, and their argument on the point is anything but creditable to their reputation for candor and scholarship. We have before us their report for the scholastic year 1877-78. This shows, that at the time of its publication, 83 pupils had graduated from the Richmond Colored Normal School, and, certainly the Board will not deny that this year (1880), 9 more were added to the list of the graduates of that school, making in all, 92 colored youth who have graduated from, and received certificates of that institution, which state they are qualified to teach in the public schools of this commonwealth. Forty of these graduates finished the prescribed course since the school became a part of the Public School system, in June, 1876, only about six of whom, however, the School Board have yet found it convenient to call into service.

"The truth is that if the Board were so moved by unhallowed motives as to accept as colored teachers *only those pupils who have graduated from the Colored Normal School since it passed into the hands of the city*, they would have, together with the nine older graduates of that institution, now employed at Navy Hill, 49 acceptable and competent colored teachers with which to supply the 45 colored public schools of this city which are now taught by 13 colored and 32 white teachers.

"The talk of the Board about having much difficulty in securing teachers for the colored schools at Navy Hill when the schools of the city were first organized into groups, and for many 'years thereafter' amounts to nothing. Of course it was a difficult matter to find competent teachers in 1870. The colored people of Richmond had, at the time, been only five years free, the public school system was just being introduced, and the Richmond Colored Normal School, if in being at all, had not sent out a single graduate to gladden the hearts and quicken and improve the intellect of the sable youth of Virginia, nor did so for three years thereafter. The 'many years,' then, in which the Board found it a difficult matter to secure suitable colored persons to teach in the colored schools at Navy Hill, extend from the year 1870, when all northern teachers, white and colored, except those who had become permanent residents of the city, were peremptorily dropped, to the summer of 1873, when the Richmond Colored Normal School gave to the State in her first graduating class, exactly as many teachers as now compose the rank and file of the colored instructors of the colored public schools of the city of Richmond. Since then the School Board of Richmond have had no difficulty in obtaining first class colored teachers to supply the colored schools of this city.

"It is doubtless true that in 1870 the cry was 'a teacher for the school, but in the intellectual growth and development of 1880 the cry is 'a school for the teacher.'

"Again, the Board are of the opinion that though we have the requisite number of Richmond Colored Normal School graduates to replace the 32 white teachers who are now teaching in the colored public schools of this city it will not do to remove 'experienced white teachers' and put in their places 'inexperienced colored teachers.' There is certainly an art in putting things, and the

muneration as any occupation then open to poor whites. On the contrary, however, urged by influential Negroes like Rev. Henry Williams, the Board of Education of Petersburg agreed

Board understand it. But we claim that our teachers are not 'inexperienced.' Yet, even if they were, the School Board have established a precedent, which would justify the change, in removing old and experienced northern teachers and filling the offices thus made vacant with inexperienced, if not in some instances positively ignorant teachers of our city and State. We would not, in this instance however have the Board follow their own bad example. We simply desire that these experienced white teachers be removed from our colored public schools to the new white schools soon to be opened in the western portion of the city, or to some other place, or else peremptorily dropped, in the same manner as were all the non-resident teachers of this city in 1870; and in their stead competent, efficient and experienced colored teachers introduced.

"Do the Board ask where can these teachers be had? We answer among the graduates of the Richmond Colored Normal School. We claim that these graduates are not inexperienced colored teachers. No man who takes the course in a first class Normal School graduates an inexperienced teacher. Normal schools are designed primarily to furnish teachers of experience and ability. Speaking on this subject, Dr. W. H. Ruffner, very justly remarks, 'that the first aim of the Normal School has always been to insure a thorough mastery of every branch of study. Following this—indeed in connection with it—comes the art of teaching others. Then comes the art of managing a school, theoretically and practically—schools of observation or practice being uniformly associated with Normal Schools.'

"To merit and receive the diploma of graduation from such an institution is, therefore, equivalent to being qualified to teach, such graduate having scholarship, skill in imparting knowledge, and ability to manage a school. What more does he need? If, then, the graduates of the Colored Normal School are not qualified to teach at Baker Street, the Valley and other public schools of this city, being, as the Board affirm, inexperienced, the Richmond Colored Normal School is a farce, its name 'a delusion and a snare,' and the public money which is expended upon it wasted to fatten a band of female sinecures. The Board can take either horn of the dilemma. But we are certain, that until recently, at least, the pupils of the Richmond Colored Normal School were, for their own sakes as scholars, thoroughly instructed in the branches of knowledge laid down in the curriculum of that school, and, for their calling as teachers, carefully trained in the art of teaching, or the principles and practice of pedagogy, and in the management of a school by actually teaching and managing a model school (connected with the institution), under the supervision and guidance of competent normal instructors. Here they gained experience, and can never, with a due regard for the value of truth, be denominated inexperienced teachers.

"In addition to this, it must be remembered that not a few of these Colored Normal School graduates have with marked success taught school for several consecutive years in the counties and smaller towns of the State. Let the Board then if they will call for 32 experienced colored teachers in addition to the 13 now at Navy Hill, and they shall be forth coming from the graduates of the Richmond Colored Normal School.

that "hereafter when vacancies occur in the offices of teachers in colored schools, colored teachers are to be appointed to fill such vacancies, if competent persons are found to fill them."²⁴ Negro teachers later won the fight.

In making their argument the Negroes requesting teachers of their own race had the support of the opinion of State Superintendent of Schools W. H. Ruffner. He had asserted that "people are best taught by members of their own race." Referring to the successful work of Negro teachers, moreover, he had said: "They surpass the whites in their management of colored children." These memorialists could refer also to many testimonies as to the worth of the Negro teachers appearing in the native white press. Recording the death of Ann F. Smith, a worthy teacher in Navy Hill School, the *Dispatch* said on February 6, 1877: "Her peculiar qualifications as a teacher and her exemplary conduct elicited the warmest praise from the principal of the Navy Hill School (Captain Camm), as also from all the school officials of the city of Richmond."²⁵ Referring to the passing of Amy Dotson, another Negro teacher in the Navy Hill School, the editor of the *Dispatch* said on March 15, 1877: "In her avocation as teacher she elicited from the parents of her scholars and principal the warmest praise for conscientious and faithful discharge of duty."²⁶ Giving an account of a teachers' institute in Buckingham County, the *Dispatch* said on August 1, 1878: "Two excellent essays were read on the subject (teaching) by Edward Lomax and his wife, colored teachers, which showed that they were hearty in their work and well qualified for teaching."²⁷

Notwithstanding the difficulties complained of by the

"But we cannot discuss this point without stating that we had never thought, that our Public School Board would have resorted to such specious pretences to hide their purpose to do injustice to a people whose intellectual and moral well being they should promote for their own sakes, if for no higher motive."—*Virginia Star*, July 24, 1880. See also *Dispatch*, May 8, 20, 21, 1879.

²³ *Dispatch*, July 10, 1880.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1880.

²⁵ *Dispatch*, Feb. 6, 1877.

²⁶ *Dispatch*, March 15, 1877.

²⁷ *Dispatch*, Aug. 1, 1878. See also *Enquirer*, April 10, 1867, and *Dispatch*, June 17, 1875.

Negroes, the public schools proved to be a beneficial, if inadequate, agency of their development. Replies to an inquiry of the Superintendent concerning the effects of public school system during ten years indicate its beneficial effect on the colored population. One hundred and five counties and cities reported favorable results; three counties and cities reported unfavorable results with respect to Negroes. From Albermarle the county superintendent wrote: "The school system has had, I think, a decidedly beneficial effect on the population generally, white and colored, in promoting an appreciation and desire for education."³⁰ From Amherst came the word: "With the colored I may almost say that we see civilization supplanting barbarism, certainly virtue supplanting vice, and education ignorance."³¹ Brunswick reported "only good effects on the population generally, but more marked on the colored than white."³¹ From Culpeper came this account: "As a general thing, our system has been a success. So far as I can judge, the colored people manifest a deeper interest in them than the poorer class, or rather the uneducated class, of whites."³² Franklin reported "the effects decidedly good on white and colored."³³ The superintendent of Gloucester County wrote: "From my observation crime has diminished particularly among the colored; and the colored people seem to have a clearer idea of what education is, and a higher appreciation and desire for education."³⁴ Henrico reported that the colored people had advanced in civilization. "The slovenly, ragged, unwashed personal appearance has given place to tidy, nicely patched clothes. The general order in their houses and cabins betoken a self-reliance and respect for the proprieties of life, which but few ever accorded to the race."³⁵ And from Nelson came this report on the Negroes: "Their improvement in morals, truthfulness, honesty and industry during the last ten years has

³⁰ *Report*, 1880, 64.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³² *Ibid.*, 67.

³³ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

been very marked, and is due, in large degree, to the influence of their schools." ³⁶

Statistics sustain these conclusions. Illiteracy among the Negroes had decreased from 322,236 in 1870 to 315,660 in 1880. In this year, the percentage of illiterates in the Negro population over ten years of age was 73.67. At the same time, there were enrolled in the common schools 68,600 Negroes, and in the higher branches 635.³⁷ The average number of months taught was 5.64, although in the principal cities schools remained in session eight or nine months.³⁸ The following tables, arranged from the report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1880, exhibit statistics of the enumeration and percentage of school population enrolled, of the average daily attendance, of the number of teachers and of the number of schools for both races, in each year of the decade from 1871 to 1880.

TABLE I: STATISTICS OF ENUMERATION, PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL POPULATION ENROLLED, AND AVERAGE ATTENDANCE ³⁹

Yr.	Enrollment of Pupils		Per Cent of School Pop. Enrolled		Average Attendance	
	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro
1871..	92,112	38,976	37.6	23.4	53,667	23,735
1872..	119,641	46,736	48.4	28.6	69,116	26,372
1873..	113,263	47,596	44.8	27.7	64,709	26,466
1874..	121,789	52,086	47.3	29.3	69,929	28,928
1875..	129,545	54,941	46.2	27.1	74,056	29,871
1876..	137,678	62,178	49.1	30.7	80,521	34,722
1877..	139,931	65,043	49.9	32.1	82,029	35,814
1878..	140,472	61,772	50.0	30.4	82,164	34,300
1879..	72,306	35,768	25.7	17.6	44,540	21,231
1880..	152,136	68,600	48.3	28.5	89,640	38,764

In addition to the common schools, several institutions for the higher education of the Negroes were established during the reconstruction. In the main these were private schools offering instruction in secondary and normal subjects, but one such was devoted to the education of ministers. This

³⁶ *Report*, 1880, 77.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1880, 26-27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1880, 128.

was the Richmond Institute, founded about the year 1867, and mainly supported by Northern Baptists. In 1871, the school had seventy pupils, some of whom were primary students.⁴¹ In 1878, it was reported that 355 young men

TABLE II: NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND NUMBER OF
TEACHERS THEREIN ⁴⁰

Yr.	Number of Public Schools		Number Public School Teachers	
	White	Negro	White	Negro
1871.....	2,278	769	2,580	504
1872.....	2,788	907	3,493	360
1873.....	2,787	909	3,378	379
1874.....	2,908	994	3,472	490
1875.....	3,121	1,064	3,723	539
1876.....	3,357	1,181	3,984	636
1877.....	3,442	1,230	4,069	671
1878.....	3,399	1,146	3,930	673
1879.....	1,816	675	2,089	415
1880.....	3,598	1,256	4,088	785

had systematically pursued the course of study there. 230 of this number had prepared for the Christian ministry, and 155 of these had been beneficiaries of the American Baptist Home Mission Society which had contributed \$14,098 for their support.⁴²

According to reports the students and graduates of Richmond Institute were, on the whole, a worthy group. Giving an account of the progress of this institution, the *Dispatch* of December 30, 1870, said: "During the quarter just closed seventy adults have been in attendance, about fifty of whom board on the premises. Forty-six of the young men are supported by Sunday schools and churches in New England at a cost of fifty dollars each. During the last summer more than a dozen of the students held commissions from the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and labored in various parts of the State. About one thousand persons have been gathered into churches during the year by persons attending the institution. They also succeeded in collecting nearly one

⁴⁰ *Report*, 1880, 126, 127.

⁴¹ *Whig*, May 27, 1871.

⁴² *Dispatch*, May 24, 1878.

thousand dollars last spring towards the repairs of the building, the white citizens as well as the colored cheerfully responding to their appeals. Recently the president of the institution, Rev. C. H. Corey, has given \$500 to the school, and the students have subscribed \$500 more. There are five teachers, two white and three colored, who are also students.”⁴³ Dr. J. E. Jones and Dr. David N. Vassar were among the first Negro teachers to serve with Dr. Corey.

Referring to the Richmond Institute again on January 1, 1875, the *Dispatch* said: “This institution, designed to train colored preachers and teachers, is so admirably conducted in its course of instruction, discipline, etc., and the conduct of its students has been so exemplary as to win the confidence of our best citizens.”⁴⁴ Writing in 1879, Pres. C. H. Corey said: “Since this school has opened it has sent out several hundred preachers and teachers. These students have subscribed \$10,000 towards an endowment fund. Of this \$2,800 has been paid. Several theological graduates, including W. W. Colley and Sol Cosby, had gone out as missionaries to Africa, but the majority of the alumni remained in Virginia. In the summer, students assisted the graduates, engaging in teaching and preaching in remote places somewhat destitute of religious instruction.”⁴⁵ In 1899, the institution combined with the Wayland Seminary of Washington, D. C., to form what has become the Virginia Union University of Richmond.

Another Institution of somewhat advanced grade was the Negro Normal School of Richmond. In 1867, this school was opened by the Freedmen’s Bureau for the training of Negro common school teachers. Some time later, it was furnished by the Bureau with a well-appointed building, together with equipment, costing \$25,000. The property and the control of the school were vested in a board of directors, acting as trustees of a public charity. The current expenses were obtained from charitable sources, including the Peabody Education Fund, which for several years annually contributed

⁴³ *Dispatch*, Dec. 30, 1870.

⁴⁴ *Dispatch*, Jan. 1, 1875.

⁴⁵ *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, Sept., 1879, 234.

\$800. Students were admitted without tuition charges. The head teacher was Miss B. L. Canady, one of the most efficient of the early Northern teachers of Negroes in Virginia. Later R. M. Manly became the principal of the school.⁴⁶

Referring to the graduation exercises of the school in 1873, the *Richmond Dispatch* said: "The examinations showed a degree of proficiency which would do honor to many schools whose pupils were more favored by previous conditions than were those of this school. There is no colored school of higher grade than this in the State, and we venture to assert that there is no school where more pains are taken in instruction than this."⁴⁷ Graduates of the institution were employed in the city schools of Richmond, and in other public schools in Virginia.

By far, the most important of these private schools was the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. The school, located at Hampton on a site purchased by the American Missionary Association, was opened on a manual training basis in 1868. General Samuel C. Armstrong was the principal. Largely through his efforts, liberal grants made by the Freedmen's Bureau and donations from Northern friends were used to erect a large school house and equip the farm of 120 acres. In June, 1870, the Institute was granted a charter from the General Assembly of Virginia creating a corporation with the power to choose their own successors, and to hold property without taxation. In this corporation the property of the school was vested by a deed from the American Missionary Association. In 1872, the General Assembly enacted a measure giving to Hampton Institute one-third of the agricultural college land grant of Virginia, amounting to 100,000 acres. This property was sold for \$95,000. The sum was divided into two unequal parts of which the greater was invested, and the lesser expended to purchase a farm of 185 acres.⁴⁸ Subsequently the income of the school was derived from generous donations and an increasing endowment.

⁴⁶ *Report, 1871, Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 205; *Freedmen's Record*, December, 1868, 187-188. See also *Dispatch*, April 18, 1871; Jan. 15, Sept. 25, 1872; June 21, 1873.

⁴⁷ *Dispatch*, June 21, 1873.

⁴⁸ *Annual Reports, 1873, Report, Superintendent of Public Instruction*, con-

The purpose of the institution was expressed by General Armstrong thus: "We are here not merely to educate students, but to make men and women out of individuals belonging to the down-trodden and despised races; to make of them not accomplished scholars, but to build up character and manhood; to fit the best among them to become teachers, and apply the best educational methods, for the work is a rounded one, touching the whole circle of life and demanding the best energies of those who take it up."⁴⁹ Thus without placing the stress on higher education, the institution undertook to train teachers for elementary, industrial and agricultural subjects. It judiciously correlated theory and practice while emphasizing the latter; and it carried out a somewhat exacting routine consisting of "a twelve hour day of work, study, and military drill, with but a few minutes for daily recreation."⁵⁰

Commencing work with fifteen students in 1868, the enrollment gradually increased, including students from without the State. In 1877, there were eighty-five pupils preparing to teach, and the faculty consisted of ten persons.⁵¹ In 1878, there were 323 students and 24 teachers, and in 1880 there were 354 students, of whom 68 were Indians,⁵² and 286 Negroes. Up to this year 1,429 students had been admitted, and as many as 353 had been graduated. Not less than 90 per cent of graduates had devoted themselves to the work of teaching Negroes, with a success and persistence which generally surpassed expectations and furnished a strong incentive for the continued efforts for the elevation of this race. This success of the graduates as teachers has been attested by Virginia educators and officials in other States where these young men and women have taught.

taining the Annual Report of the Hampton Institute, 127-132; Acts, 1871-1872, 312-315.

⁴⁹ Talbot, *Armstrong*, 217.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵¹ Report, 1871, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 204.

⁵² When the proposal was first made to admit Indians the *Dispatch* in its issue of Apr. 9, 1878, protested, saying: "Our opinion is that the greatest sin of this nation is the attempt to force political and social equality upon two distinct races of man."

During the school year ending in 1880, they taught between 15,000 and 20,000 children. The majority taught in country schools which paid them from \$25 to \$30 a month, for five or six months.⁵³

In 1879, Sir George Campbell referred thus to the progress of Hampton: "I principally came here to see the 'Hampton Agricultural Institute' for blacks. I went over it under the guidance of General Armstrong, who has charge of it, and has made it what it is. It is not quite an Agricultural Institute, for it is more used to turn out schoolmasters than anything else. The justification for teaching them agriculture is that, as the schools are commonly open part of the year only, there is every opportunity for the practice of improved agriculture during the remainder of the year. Several trades are also taught. I believe this is the only place in the Southern States where black printers are educated. The Institution is primarily supported by funds subscribed in the North. . . . It is not a free school, not being looked upon as charitable. The students are expected to pay moderate fees, and by their work to earn something towards their own living. Besides the negro students there are a good many Indians, sent by the United States Government. They are Indians from the Western tribes; and it is intended that, after being civilized and educated, they are to go back, and to improve their countrymen. I was much interested in these Indians. They are not red, but rather yellow, and not at all unlike some of the Indo-Chinese tribes to the east of Bengal."⁵⁴

"I had a good deal of talk with General Armstrong about the negroes and about Southern politics. He is the son of a missionary who spent many years in the Sandwich Islands, but was a distinguished Federal soldier in the war. He thinks that the blacks are certainly inferior to the whites in intellect, but they are improvable. The Indians are decidedly stronger in intellect, but much more difficult to manage."⁵⁵

⁵³ Report, 1880, Superintendent of Public Instruction. See Report of Hampton Institute, 8.

⁵⁴ Campbell, *White and Black, The Outcome of a Visit to the United States*, 275-276.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

Among the prominent graduates of Hampton, Booker T. Washington became the most distinguished. Widely known as the founder of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Washington established there an institution based on the general principle of Hampton. The two schools differ in the sense that Tuskegee has a negro faculty in contradistinction to the mixed faculty of Hampton. In time, Tuskegee outgrew Hampton in numbers, and became a convincing evidence of the capacity of the negro for self-government and practical education. When Washington died, he was succeeded as principal of Tuskegee by Robert R. Moton, another prominent alumnus of Hampton.⁵⁶

Besides these important private schools certain others were later established. These were commonly of elementary and secondary grade, although some offered normal, collegiate and theological training. Such schools include the Christianburg Industrial Institute founded by the Friends Association of Philadelphia in 1865; the Thyne Institute, a Presbyterian school founded at Chase City in 1876; the Payne Divinity School in Petersburg in 1878; the Boydton Institute in 1878; the Norfolk Mission College established by the Presbyterians in 1883; the Hartshorn Memorial College, a Baptist school for colored girls established at Richmond in 1884; St. Paul Normal and Industrial School in 1888; and the Virginia Theological Seminary and College founded at Lynchburg in 1888. Opened by the Virginia Baptist State Convention in 1890, this school last mentioned has been supported entirely by Negroes.⁵⁷ It has done excellent work in demonstrating what the Negro can accomplish on his own initiative.

During this period, moreover, the State made some provisions for the higher education of the Negro. Except for a grant to Hampton, Virginia contributed practically nothing toward the education of Negro teachers prior to 1880. In this year, the State commenced the plan of holding normal institutes in the summer for the purpose of giving teachers practical, thorough instructions in primary methods and in

⁵⁶ Francis G. Peabody, *Education for Life*, 193.

⁵⁷ United States Bureau of Education, *Negro Education*, II. Virginia, 607-668.

problems of school organization and discipline. The institute for colored teachers was held in Lynchburg where 240 Negro teachers assembled for a period of six weeks. A faculty of competent Negro instructors was secured. These included Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Montgomery, Mr. H. F. Grant of Washington, D. C., and Prof. W. S. Montgomery, then of Alcorn University, but later the Assistant Superintendent of the Public Schools of Washington, D. C. A number of distinguished educators lectured to the Negroes during the session, and it was uniformly successful.⁵⁸

Two years later, as a result of the triumph of the Readjuster Party, the General Assembly founded the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute at Petersburg for the higher education of colored youth of the State, and also for the training of competent Negro teachers. "The act of incorporation appropriated \$100,000 of the proceeds of the sale of the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad for the erection of suitable buildings, and \$20,000 annually for its support." Later the annuity was reduced to \$15,000. In October, 1883, the Institute was opened for the admission of students. John Mercer Langston became the president. Later the name of the institution was changed to the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, and instruction in collegiate subjects was discontinued.⁵⁹ The college course, however, has recently been restored.

These agencies at work among the Negroes enabled them to show what they could do toward their own uplift. They did well. In the official report for 1880, Superintendent Ruffner, then, could truthfully say: "And there is no social or governmental purpose for which money could be more wisely spent than in the systematic training of colored teachers for colored schools."⁶⁰ Writing from observations in Virginia and elsewhere in the South, Sir George Campbell said in 1879: "During the last dozen years, the negroes have had a very large share of political education. Considering the

⁵⁸ Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1880 (106-107).

⁵⁹ Catalogue, Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, 1891-92, 49; *Acts*, 1881, 1882, 283-287.

⁶⁰ *Report*, 1880, 107.

troubles and the ups and downs that they have gone through, it is, I think, wonderful how beneficial this education has been to them, and how much these people, so lately in the most debased condition of slavery, have acquired independent ideas, and, far from lapsing into anarchy, have become citizens with ideas of law and property and order. The white serfs of European countries took hundreds of years to rise to the level which the negroes have attained in a dozen.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Campbell, *White and Black*, 131.

CHAPTER X

RELIGIOUS EFFORTS AMONG THE NEGROES

Before the Civil War the religion of the slave was commonly that of his owner. The master class regarded an independent religious system for the blacks inconsistent with slavery. Confirmed in this opinion by the early nineteenth century insurrectionary movements led by Gabriel Prosser, and Nat Turner, supposedly a Negro preacher, the Virginians enacted laws prohibiting assemblages of Negroes for religious worship conducted by their own ministers.¹ This action brought the religious instruction of the slaves under the strict supervision of the proslavery churches of the whites who, nevertheless, permitted large groups of urban Negroes to worship in separate churches directed by white ministers. But the rural Negroes generally worshipped in the master's church where they occupied a segregated section during the regular services, or worshipped in meetings held especially for the blacks. Yet, although strictly limited by this prohibitive legislation, Negroes worshipping in separate churches benefitted from the revival of instruction following the division of some national church bodies into Northern and Southern jurisdictions during the forties. Considered as a whole, however, the general plan of religious instruction was inadequate to a thorough Christianization of the Negroes.²

It was out of the question, then, to expect a caste establishment to make necessary provision for the Christianization of freedmen given as property, it was believed, to carry out the purposes of the god of racial superiority. The former slaveholders later participated in the uplift of the freedmen,^{2a}

¹ See *Code of Virginia* of 1860, 810.

² Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 131, 132, 133, 135, 151, 153, 160-164.

^{2a} For some of the instances of the native whites' interest in the religious instruction of Negroes see reports and resolutions in the *Enquirer*, June 11, 1866; June 1, 1868; May 16, 1869; *Dispatch*, Jan. 28, Sept. 8, 1871; May 12, 1875; June 2, 3, 4, 21, 1879.

but they never worked out a definite program. They had first to recover from the failure to obtain a favorable answer to their prayers. In a sermon preached by a Southern minister in 1865 appears this typical attitude. "And does it seem to you, my brethren," said he, "that during the last terrible four years the prayers of God's people in these Southern States, because they have not been answered in just the way you had chosen, have not been heard at all? Be not cast down. Do we not know that the fervent prayers of the saints cannot fail of an answer? But now we see through a glass, darkly. By-and-bye, if we will but wait, in God's good time we shall see, and know, and understand." ³

The first real stimulus to the religious training of the Negroes after the upheaval came from the North. The earliest Northern missionary efforts began in Virginia in September, 1861. The American Missionary Association sent the Rev. L. C. Lockwood to Fortress Monroe where he speedily established Sabbath Schools for Negroes. As the war progressed the missionary and educational work of the Association extended over all southeastern Virginia controlled by the Union armies. In the meantime, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, the Friends, the Congregationalists, the Free Will Baptists and other church agencies sent missionaries into Virginia, or cooperated with the American Missionary Association, during and after the war, in meeting the religious needs of the Negroes. ⁴

The Association did not establish churches in Virginia immediately. Believing that the religious progress of the Negroes depended upon their Christian education, the Association decided to found churches in connection with the establishment of permanent institutions of learning. After Hampton Institute had been founded, the Association felt that the time was ripe to form a church among the freedmen upon the basis of intelligence and active piety, free from the

³ *The Nation*, I, 109.

⁴ *History of the American Missionary Association*, 10-12; *Report of the American Missionary Association*, 1868, 37; *Report Executive Board, Friends Association*, 1864 and 1865.

emotionalism of the past.⁵ In 1869, therefore, the Association established a Congregational church at Hampton. There were 15 members under the leadership of the Reverend Richard Tolman. The church grew slowly. In 1872, there were 38 church members and 135 pupils enrolled in the Sunday School. In 1876, the church membership was 101; the Sunday School, 205. In 1880, there were 146 pupils. In the meantime, the Rev. John H. Denison succeeded Tolman as the minister.⁶

The "church planting" of the Association was an experiment. Speaking generally in 1874, the Association said: "The Freedmen are neither heathen nor infidels. They believe in Christ, but generally their faith is without works and their zeal without knowledge. They have churches and ministers, but both ministers and people are ignorant, and, in too many cases immoral. Their great need, therefore, is *Christian knowledge*, leading to an intelligent faith and a practical morality."⁷ Writing in 1876, however, Rev. Mr. Tolman stated that the Hampton church had exerted an excellent influence on members joining from other churches. According to Tolman, many had had only their feeling stirred, while their conduct had not been reformed. Yet he had observed "wonderful transformation of character." "Some who, when they came had been addicted to lying and stealing and other vices and who seemed at first beyond recovery, by means of the educational and Christian influences brought to bear upon them, have been moulded into a manhood and womanhood of the noblest type."⁸

The Presbyterians had been one of the first to cooperate with other agencies in Virginia.⁹ In 1865, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church resolved to enter upon and vigorously promote the mental and spiritual develop-

⁵ *Report of the American Missionary Association*, 1868, 37.

⁶ *Reports, American Missionary Association*, 1869, 32; 1872, 34; 1876, 50; 1880, 62.

⁷ *History of the American Missionary Association*, 40.

⁸ *American Missionary*, February, 1876, 38.

⁹ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church* (new series), 1869, 295.

ment of the freedmen. A resolution was adopted "that special efforts be made to instruct and evangelize and gather into churches on a credible profession of faith the colored population." A committee was appointed to direct the religious and educational interests of the freedmen.¹⁰ In 1868, provision was made to ordain colored men to preach the gospel;¹¹ and the permanent committee on Home Missions recommended that "it is the true policy of the church to combine as far as practicable both parts of the work, evangelism and education, and to carry them on under its direction."¹² In the next year, it was reported that the Presbyterians sustained, either wholly or partly, ten schools in Virginia. Religious and mental instruction had been practically combined and plans were in progress to form a Normal School at Winchester, as a center for mission work. The school commenced, but was abandoned some time after 1871, because of insufficient funds to retain the property. Some few Negroes, like David and Joshua Carrington of the Presbytery of Brunswick¹³ and Leroy H. Johnson of the Presbytery of Montgomery,¹⁴ were ordained to the ministry here and there where Negro Presbyterians were found. Thus the Presbyterians did something for the freedmen, but were not able to proselyte them extensively.¹⁵

Certain other denominations attracted a small following in Virginia. One such, the Episcopalians, did little except to extend physical relief to the freedmen. Yet several Episcopal missions developed among the Negroes probably as a result of their attachment to the church during slavery. In 1876, an Episcopal church in Richmond had a small membership and a Sunday School of 60 pupils.¹⁶ The St.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* (old series), 1865, 544, 556.

¹¹ *Ibid.* (old series), 1865, 601.

¹² *Ibid.* (new series), 1868, 46.

¹³ *Dispatch*, April 26 and June 30, 1875.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1878.

¹⁵ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church*, 1869, 252; 1871, 67.

¹⁶ *Whig*, December 10, 1872; *Enquirer*, January 2, 1876; Murphy, *Richmond Guide Book*, 1881, 60-61.

Stephen's mission and school flourished in Petersburg under Major Giles B. Cook, however, and became the nucleus out of which developed the present church there, the well-equipped Peabody High School, and the Payne Divinity School.

Similarly the Catholics made some impression upon the freedmen. In 1867, the American Missionary Association expressed the fear that the "splendors" of the Catholic Church would appeal to the Negro's "love of display." According to the Association, the "man of sai" had already discovered and entered this promising field.¹⁷ In 1872, moreover, the Rev. W. B. Derrick, when speaking before the Virginia Conference of the A. M. E. Church, offered a resolution condemning the efforts and the means used by the Roman Catholic Church to proselyte the Negroes, and admonishing the latter to have nothing to do with Catholicism.¹⁸ In 1875, too, the *Enquirer* reported the organization of a Christian church in Norfolk. There were nine members.¹⁹

The Methodist Episcopal Church appealed to some of the freedmen. This church did effective work in the religious instruction of the Negroes through the Freedmen's Aid Society organized in 1866 to systematize the work of missionary and church extension societies. Schools were established at Winchester and Kilmarnock, Virginia, and the normal school in Richmond was aided.²⁰ The church did not enter Virginia as an ecclesiastical organization until 1867. Pursuant to the action of the General Conference of 1864, authorizing the organization of colored mission conferences, the church organized the Virginia and North Carolina Mission Conference at Portsmouth on January 3, 1867. Bishop Scott presided. The conference, however, was not exclusively a colored mission conference; in fact, it appears that a majority of the members were white. At the organization there were 14 travelling preachers, 671 members, 8 Sunday Schools, 54 officers and teachers and 463 scholars. In 1880, there were

¹⁷ Report, 1867, 18.

¹⁸ *Enquirer*, April 2 and 3, 1872.

¹⁹ *Enquirer*, January 12, 1875.

²⁰ *Annual Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1869, 6.

6,124 members, 1,189 members on probation, 91 local preachers and 4,295 Sunday School pupils. In 1890, Stevens reported that there were 9,601 white members of the church in Virginia. Statistics for this year indicated that the number of communicants in Virginia were 12,132. From this it would appear that less than 3,000 were Negroes. According to Conser, who spent several years reorganizing the church in Virginia, the Negro Methodists tended to join the African Methodist bodies in the State.²¹

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was the first independent Negro ecclesiastical organization to enter Virginia. It came after the St. John's Chapel of Norfolk, dissatisfied with existing conditions, disconnected itself from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, on May 4, 1863. In October of that year, the congregation secured the church property through the aid of Major General Dix, a federal officer. Through the cooperation of Professor Woodbury of the Negro school in Norfolk and Bishop A. W. Wayman, a representative of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the local body connected itself with the Baltimore Conference of this denomination. From 1864 to 1867, the body prosecuted its work in Virginia through this connection.²²

On May 10, 1867, the Virginia Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Richmond. Bishop Wayman presided. One among the seventeen ministers enrolled was J. D. S. Hall, formerly a missionary of the church in South Carolina. Hall, together with J. R. V. Thomas and G. J. Watkins, were appointed presiding elders of the districts established with headquarters in Richmond, Portsmouth and Norfolk. The conference also attempted to unite the colored Methodists of the State. It adopted a resolution authorizing a committee to write to all Negro Methodists in Virginia, defining the position of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, stating the points of agreement

²¹ *Methodist Almanac*, 1865, 49; 1872, 52; *Minutes of the Conference*, 1881, 111-112; Abel Stevens, *Supplementary History of American Methodism*, 132, 164, 171; S. L. M. Conser, *Virginia after the War*, 45.

²² Butt, *African Methodism in Virginia*, 32, 33.

and disagreement with respect to Methodist bodies, and "urging all to unite in one common fold."²³

Thereafter, the Virginia Conference met annually. In 1868, B. T. Tanner, later a distinguished bishop of the church, attended the sessions. In 1869, W. B. Derrick, a future leader in the denomination, joined the conference. In 1873, the body commenced a project to establish a conference high school in the State. In 1884, the plan culminated in the opening of the Virginia Conference Institute at Portsmouth. Meanwhile, the conference had slowly but steadily grown. The number of full members increased from 3,994 in 1868 to 5,919 in 1880. In the same time, the number of probationary members increased from 232 to 446. The church had expanded to include charges in practically every town and in some rural communities of the State. In 1875, the church owned 58 church edifices, property valued at \$115,505.²⁴

Despite the small membership the conference attracted some well-informed ministers to its work. Referring to the conference meeting at Danville, in 1874, a correspondent wrote that the ministers he had met were polite and some were well educated. The white people, said he, informed the presiding bishop that they would contribute to the support of the local church, if he would assign thereto one of his best men. They were favorably impressed with the Rev. W. B. Derrick who had delivered an excellent address on education.²⁵ He was born in the British West Indies in 1843. He was educated in a private school there. He was thereafter an apprentice to blacksmithing and later engaged in navigation. He came to this country during the Civil War and served in the navy.

William B. Derrick became the most distinguished of the early members of the Virginia Conference. Derrick entered the Baltimore Conference in 1867, but was transferred therefrom to the Virginia Conference in 1869. He served as a

²³ Butt, *African Methodism in Virginia*, 34, 35, 36. See also *Enquirer*, March 28, 1868; *Dispatch*, April 15, 1871; March 28, 1872; July 25, 1873.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-42, 57, 59, 85, 102.

²⁵ Richmond *Dispatch*, April 21, 1874; see also *Dispatch*, July 25, 1873.

pastor or presiding elder in Norfolk, Staunton, Portsmouth, Danville, Wytheville, Farmville and Richmond. After he had rendered efficient service in Richmond, winning the confidence of both races, Derrick engaged in politics to the extent of giving Negroes wholesome, practical advice on their duties and rights. He was induced to enter politics more seriously at a time when one political faction wished to readjust the State debt. Opposing readjustment, Derrick favored the party proposing to pay the debt as contracted. Upon the victory of his opponents supported by the mass of Negroes, Derrick deemed it expedient to leave Virginia. Resigning his church connections he visited relatives in the West Indies. Later he resumed the ministry in the North and was elected a bishop of his church.²⁶

The African Methodist Episcopal Church slightly preceded the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Virginia. In 1866, the Virginia Conference of the latter was organized by Bishop J. J. Clinton. Some twenty-five members enrolled. The conference embraced that portion of Virginia south of the James River, except that included in the Tennessee Conference, and also fourteen counties in the northeastern part of North Carolina. Developing rapidly, the conference, it was reported, became one of the best, both as to ministers and membership. In proportion to its membership, according to Bishop Hood, it led all the Southern conferences in raising the general fund of the church.²⁷

Two or three members of this conference stood out as efficient ministers. One of these was J. H. Manley. He was "a good practical gospel preacher, and an excelling pastor."²⁸ For two years, Manley was the presiding elder of the conference. Another was W. H. Newbry, who developed a church at Franklin, and served with much success at Norfolk.²⁹ A third able minister was Joseph P. Evans, the presiding elder of the Petersburg District, and a State Senator from Peters-

²⁶ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 88-96; Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 231-232; *Richmond Dispatch*, 1879; *Richmond Whig*, April 9, 1874.

²⁷ Hood, *History of the A. M. E. Z. Church*, 354.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 356.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 358-359.

burg in 1874. Evans lost favor with the church because of his political activities, considered by the body "inconsistent with his social calling."³⁰ In the conference of 1874, he was appointed a State missionary.

Yet another Negro Methodist body came into the State. This consisted of Negroes who had remained loyal to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. After the emancipation had disrupted the old social relations the whites saw no reason for the retention of Negro communicants in their church. The General Conference of 1866 of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held in New Orleans, adopted a report on the religious instruction of colored people recommending separate pastoral charges for the colored people, separate quarterly conferences, districts, and presiding elders, separate annual conferences, and the establishment of a separate General Conference after two or more annual conferences had been formed. The complete separation came in 1870. The Negro body was called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.³¹

In June, 1871, the ministers of this church met at Enfield, North Carolina, the representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, received certain properties from them and formed a conference for Virginia and North Carolina.^{31a} The total membership in the two States was 1,900. Thereafter the development in Virginia was very slow for the reason that the majority of Negro Methodists had already connected themselves with either the African Methodist Episcopal or the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.³²

The large body of Virginian Negroes, however, continued in the Baptist Church with which they had closely connected through their masters in slavery. Negro Baptists generally stood firm, although because of changed conditions the whites failed to carry out practical plans for the development of Negro Baptists. Yet the white Baptists recognized their obligation

³⁰ *Dispatch*, Nov. 11, 1874. See also *Dispatch*, March 9, 1878.

³¹ Phillips, *History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church*; see also report in the *Enquirer*, April 28, 1866.

^{31a} *Dispatch*, June 12, 23, 1871; March 7, 1879.

³² *Whig*, June 2, 1871.

to impart religious instruction to the Negroes. Speaking before the Baptist General Association of Virginia for 1866, the Rev. D. Shaver read from the report of the State Mission Board a statement representing that cooperation with pastors of adjacent African churches was repelled unless upon conditions transcending alike the spheres of the Board and the Association.³³ On the other hand, the Rev. Doctor Poindexter offered a resolution "that it is a sacred and important duty to establish, wherever practicable, Sunday schools for our Colored population and that we affectionately urge our brethern to a prompt and persistent attention to this duty." The Rev. Doctor Ryland supported the resolution on the ground that the gospel should be preached to every creature.³⁴ In the Baptist General Association for 1867, moreover, the committee on the religious instruction of colored people submitted resolutions to the effect that the State Mission Board be directed to accept pecuniary contributions from any quarter wherewith to aid in the religious instruction of suitable colored persons preparing to study the Christian ministry, especially, and commending the white churches which maintained Sunday Schools for colored people.³⁵

In the meantime, conditions required a readjustment in the church relations of the white and Negro Baptists. Separate Negro congregations immediately after the war expressed a desire for independent organization and for Negro ministers. Negroes worshipping in white churches became impatient of the restrictions confining them to certain pews or the gallery as they had been prior to the war. On the other hand, the whites fearful lest the Negroes might desire "social equality" rigorously maintained all pre-war distinctions. As a rule, the local churches either encouraged the Negro membership to withdraw or diplomatically requested them to set up churches for themselves. In some cases they were actually told to get out of the white churches.³⁶ It was

³³ Reported in the *Enquirer*, June 9, 1866.

³⁴ *Enquirer*, June 11, 1866.

³⁵ *American Baptist Year Book*, 1868, Proceedings of Baptist General Association of Virginia for 1867.

³⁶ *Enquirer*, June 11, 1866.

agreeable to both races, therefore, when the Negro Baptists determined to form a separate ecclesiastical organization. Thus in 1866, Virginian Negro Baptists convened with others from the South at Richmond, where they formed a national organization of Negro Baptists. Prior to this action, however, the Negro had formed a connection with Northern Baptist societies. These had supported missionaries in Virginia during the war, and increased their religious and educational activities since the war.³⁷ The principal work of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the main Southern Baptist agency working in Virginia, was the Richmond Institute, heretofore considered. The impetus to intelligent preaching and Christian living among Negro Baptists came from this institution.

Next, came the organization of the Virginia Baptist State Convention by Negroes. This was the work of the Norfolk Union Baptist and Colored Shiloh Association, meeting in the Zion Baptist Church of Portsmouth, May 9, 1867.³⁸ The Association appointed a committee on missions which submitted a report recommending the appointment of two ordained missionaries to travel through the State to preach, baptize, and administer the sacrament; and to organize scattered Baptist Churches and prevent other denominations from proselyting persons of the Baptist faith. Officers elected at this convention included such prominent ministers as James H. Holmes of Richmond and Henry Williams, Jr., of Petersburg.³⁹

The convention met annually. Convening at Norfolk, in 1868, the body adopted a resolution requesting that churches enable their pastors to "visit adjacent destitute fields" for the purpose of evangelizing prospects. The State was organized with sixteen districts for the better prosecution of the work, and the district secretaries appointed were empowered to do missionary work since the Convention was unable to support paid missionaries. The Virginia Baptist

³⁷ Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 209.

³⁸ *American Baptist Year Book*, 1869, 87-88.

³⁹ *American Baptist Year Book*, 1869, 88.

Sunday School Union was formed in order to "promote the Baptist interest of Baptist Sunday-Schools, and to give aid to such schools as are indigent."⁴⁰

The convention of 1870 was held at Fredericksburg. The body hailed with delight the organization of an educational department of the Consolidated Convention, the national body, through which it might aid in the general work of education.⁴¹ At this convention the Sunday School Union reported 23 schools, 2,900 scholars, 2,538 volumes in the libraries, and the conversion of 40 scholars. At the annual meeting in Lynchburg in 1871 still further development was shown. A white reporter, having observed the proceedings, said: "It must be said in justice to this body that their deliberations were conducted upon strictly parliamentary principles and were characterized by utmost good feeling."⁴² In 1878, it was reported that there were five missionaries in the State. Two of these were maintained by the Baptist Home Mission Society.⁴³

The annual reports of the convention show that the Baptists had experienced a consistent growth. Between 1867 and 1880, they established churches or missions in practically every community in the State. The regular missionaries served the year around, and visited every hamlet in the State. Everywhere they organized churches and Sunday Schools and performed other religious duties. In 1867, the State convention was organized by two associations composed of 60 churches, 45 ordained ministers and 21,005 members.⁴⁴ In 1874, the convention consisted of five associations. These reported 306 churches, 181 ordained ministers and 80,446 members. Five years later there were six associations. In these were included 589 churches, 294 ordained ministers and 128,164 members.⁴⁵ For the year 1880, the convention reported nine associations for two of which no statistics were

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1870, 71-72.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1871, 58.

⁴² *Dispatch*, May 13, 1871.

⁴³ *Report, American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 1878, 58.

⁴⁴ *American Baptist Year Book*, 1868, 111.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1875, 76-77; 1880, 63-64.

given. According to the report seven associations contained 446 churches, 249 ordained ministers and 107,307 members.⁴⁶

Writers have advanced various reasons to explain this predominance of the Baptist Church among the Virginian Negroes. All recognize that the majority attended this church before the war. One has said that the Baptist Church offers a broad opportunity to develop the tendency to excitement, a remarkable feature in the Negro's piety.⁴⁷ Another has stated that in the constitution of the church, on strictly democratic lines, each congregation being a law unto itself, is found the source of attraction. Especially was this the case where persons preferred a career in the ministry to more laborious employment, since fitness for the ministry turned upon the issue of personality rather than training.⁴⁸ Still another reason may be found in the predominance of the Baptists among separate Negro Churches formed in Virginian cities during slavery.

The separate churches established during slavery formed a nucleus around which the Negroes built after the war. Among such early churches were the Harrison Street Baptist Church, established in Petersburg in 1774, and another at Williamsburg in 1776. Others were early organized in Portsmouth and Lynchburg before the Civil War.⁴⁹

In Norfolk there were three Baptist Churches and one Methodist Church for Negroes prior to 1860. In Richmond there were two Baptist Churches prior to 1856, and before 1860 another Baptist and a Methodist Church had sprung up.⁵⁰ These churches, as a rule, however, were directed by white ministers.

The most famous of these churches was the First African Baptist Church of Richmond. Originally the First Baptist Church of Richmond housed a mixed congregation of whites and Negroes. The church was given to the Negroes after

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1881, p. 66.

⁴⁷ Macrae, *Americans at Home*, II, 96.

⁴⁸ Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 197.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 135, 136; *Richmond Dispatch*, Feb. 16, 1880.

⁵⁰ Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 135; Earnest, *Religious Development of the Negro in Virginia*, 90.

the whites had constructed a new edifice in 1841. Following the prevailing custom, the church was assigned a white minister. He was the Rev. Robert Ryland, the president of Richmond College. Ryland advocated the thorough instruction of the slaves, and so emphasized consistent Christian conduct that the Negroes considered it a privilege to belong to this church. At the close of the war, Ryland was succeeded by one Mr. Stockwell, a Northern white man, who relinquished the office in 1867.⁵¹

In 1867, a Negro became the pastor of the First African Church. This man was James H. Holmes. Born a Virginian slave in 1826, Holmes was baptized in the church in 1842. He served as a deacon from 1855 to 1865, when he was elected the assistant pastor. Under his leadership after 1867, the church did not retrograde. Writing of Holmes in 1874, a correspondent said: "the Rev. Mr. Holmes is a born leader." . . . Continuing the writer said, "the church is not, as I suspected it might be, a mob. It is thoroughly organized. . . . The discipline is strict."⁵² As a promoter of social welfare and civic activities Holmes connected his church with the life of the people. His congregation progressively increased in size. Exceeding 3,800 members in 1876, it had grown to 5,000 in 1879. It was reported that the congregation was the second largest in the world. This church continued in the forefront of the Virginian Negro religious work.⁵³

There were other useful churches in Virginia. One was the Ebenezer Baptist Church of Richmond, organized from an overflow membership of the First African Church in 1855. It was controlled by the white people during slavery but called a Negro pastor after the war. The Rev. Richard H. Wells served in this capacity for a long period. In 1879, the

⁵¹ *Richmond Dispatch*, August 16, 1876; Woodson, *History of the Negro Church*, 161, 162.

⁵² *Whig*, July 19, 1874—Statement of the Richmond correspondent of the *Watchman and Reflector*.

⁵³ *Whig*, June 20 and July 17, 1874; *Enquirer*, June 2, 1876; *Dispatch*, August 16, 1876, and January 1, 1879; Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 667; Murphy, *Guide Book of Richmond*, 1881, pp. 60-61.

church had a membership of 1,529. Mr. Wells was fortunate in having here a large number of intelligent Christians who were equally as fortunate in having the services of such a polished and pious leader. His congregation was easily one of the most representative in this country. Citizens of Richmond still remember him as a leader of influence for good in the uplift of the Negroes of that city.^{53a}

Honorable mention should be given also to such ministers as Fields Cook, of Richmond and Alexandria; Harrison Scott, S. H. Gary and A. M. Conway of Danville; E. G. Corprew of Portsmouth; T. P. Smith, Leonard Black and H. Dickerson of Petersburg; Harrison Blair of Culpepper; George L. Dixon of Fredericksburg; Milton Smith of Lexington; and W. J. Barnett of Charlottesville. These men were the pioneers in the work of Virginia. Fields Cook was also a doctor. He had studied medicine and had a good library which others freely used. W. J. Barnett was a native of Africa, but he easily fitted into the life of the Negro of this country as attested by the large number of churches which he organized in the central part of the State. Milton Smith was a man of great influence among his own people and was highly respected also by the whites.

From such a sketch, too, the influential William Troy, the predecessor of Dr. Walter H. Brooks, of the Second Baptist Church of Richmond, cannot be omitted. In his day he was a preacher of great influence and he laid a foundation upon which others have since then built a larger structure. Referring to his preaching at the Shiloh Baptist Association in Virginia in 1870, the correspondent of the *Dispatch* from Charlottesville said: "Most, if not all of the churches of this town were tendered the Association for its use, and many of our white citizens listened with pleasure to the gospel as proclaimed by these colored ministers." Referring especially to the sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Troy, the correspondent said: "His theme was the coming of the kingdom of Christ, and his sermon was listened to

^{53a} *Dispatch*, Jan. 3, 1871; May 17, Dec. 2, 1873; Jan. 29, 1874; Sept. 26, 1878.

with a great deal of attention from beginning to end. His elocution is exceedingly pleasing and we have rarely heard a better speaker.”⁵⁴

In a younger church but not less influential there was serving during these years a more spectacular but at the same time an equally successful minister. This was the Rev. John Jasper. He was born of slave parents in Fluvanna County in 1812. He began preaching before the Civil War. He was often called on to preach to the sick and wounded soldiers in the Confederate hospitals at Richmond. In 1866 he became the pastor of the Third Baptist Church of Petersburg, but returned to Richmond for missionary work the following year and organized the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. This he served as pastor until his death in 1901. He became famous throughout the country by his theory that the sun moves. Whenever he preached this sermon his church was crowded with whites as well as blacks and engagements were offered him in various cities of the country.⁵⁵ He also delivered his famous sermon before the Virginia legislature.

The thinking class of people usually referred to this sermon as Jasper's weakness. In him, however, they had to recognize the power and the force of a great preacher. He could use flowery language with which he painted most beautiful word pictures. His illustrations were always striking, his logic, except on the theory of the sun, was sound, and his elocution was almost incomparable. Referring to two sermons one of which Jasper preached on the occasion of the Virginia Baptist State Convention at Charlottesville in 1870, the correspondent of the *Dispatch* said: "He is a man of good preaching talents and an eloquent speaker. At the services both morning and evening the galleries were filled with white people and on both occasions the preachers expressed their grateful appreciation of the kindness of their white brethren. The services were conducted in perfect taste, and on the whole, we very much doubt whether there

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⁵⁵ *Dispatch*, Feb. 25, 1879.

were two better sermons preached in any pulpit in Virginia than those preached in the Baptist Church Sunday."

Along with these gentlemen there should be mentioned also a younger man, Christopher H. Payne. He was born in West Virginia in 1848 and began life as a teacher and minister in that State. Feeling the need for more training, however, he abandoned his field in the mountains to come to the Richmond Institute for further education. While there in school for three years he engaged in Sunday School and church work, from Staunton to Norfolk, and from Alexandria to Danville. He also served as the pastor of the Moore Street Baptist Church and later as pastor of another church in Norfolk. Being an intelligent man he always made an impression on his hearers and his up-to-date logical preaching tended to discredit the "fogey" and backwoods idea of worship in which some Negroes were disposed to indulge.⁵⁶

Another minister of the younger group, Dr. Walter H. Brooks, made a distinct contribution to the religious life of the Negroes of Virginia after the Civil War. He was the son of Albert R. Brooks, a business man. He was born in Richmond in 1851. After preparation in the charity schools, established for the freedmen, and some other training in a school in Rhode Island, he completed his education at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. His public life actually began in 1874 when he became a Sunday School missionary for the American Baptist Publication Society. He held this position for three years. In 1877 he became the pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Richmond, where he labored with great success until 1880. He then went to Louisiana as Sunday School missionary for the American Baptist Publication Society and served until 1882 when he became the pastor of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church of Washington, D. C.

Wherever Dr. Brooks went and wherever he spoke he always made an impression. Referring to his successful work in the Sunday School Convention held in Richmond on November 27, 1874, the reporter said: "The discussion was participated in by Rev. Walter H. Brooks who led off in an

⁵⁶ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 370-371.

admirable speech.”⁵⁷ Mentioning him later this reporter said: “Rev. Walter H. Brooks, then made a sensible, earnest, well expressed and really eloquent speech.”^{57a}

For a long time after the emancipation, the white Baptists failed to recognize the Negro Baptists of the State. But in 1879, Dr. Brooks succeeded in appearing before that body and in a masterly address took the convention by storm. He not only established the desirable relations between these bodies, but made for himself the reputation of a courageous leader. The press gave this speech wide publicity and Dr. Brooks was thereafter nationally known.⁵⁸

Working successfully in this sphere, too, not altogether as a minister but sometimes as a teacher there, was Dr. Joseph E. Jones. He was born of slave parents in Lynchburg in 1850. He stole the fragments of knowledge during slavery and studied later under a Confederate soldier. Immediately after the emancipation he attended the charity schools along with so many Negroes at that time. He completed his education at Howard University, at the Richmond Institute, and Madison (Colgate) University in New York. Finishing school in 1876, he immediately became a teacher in the Richmond Institute. This school was later known as the Richmond Theological Seminary, and finally merged with Wayland Seminary as Virginia Union University. He was among the first teachers cooperating with Dr. C. H. Cory in the development of this institution. He was later promoted to the chair of Homiletics and Greek and served that institution in some such capacity until his death in 1923. He was thus not only a minister but a maker of ministers. In this commanding position he enjoyed the opportunity of shaping the lives, and in that way the destiny, of a large part of the Negroes not only in Virginia but throughout the United States. In connection with the work at the institution, moreover, he found time to preach to congregations in or near Richmond and thus to stimulate and enrich the Christian life of the Negroes of that State during these years.

⁵⁷ *Dispatch*, Nov. 27, 1874.

^{57a} *Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1874.

⁵⁸ Caldwell, *History of the American Negro*, Washington, D. C., edition, p. 228.

His biographer said of him: "Professor Jones is one of the most gifted men in America. He has the ear and heart of his people and fills that distinction of high position to which his brethren North and South have called him." Another referring to him in 1878 tells us: "Professor Jones is an efficient teacher, a popular and instructive preacher, and a forcible writer."⁵⁹

On this same order, there appeared much later another teacher, the Rev. Anthony Binga, pastor of the Negro Baptist Church in Manchester, now called South Richmond. He had been educated in Canada before the war. Knowing of the chance for better opportunities where members of his race were in large numbers, he cast his lot in Virginia. There he quickly took rank as one of the most intelligent ministers in the State. In his preaching and in his life he gave emphasis to the importance of an intelligent appreciation of Christianity as shown by his sensible rather than emotional worship. To emphasize his thoughts along these lines he not only delivered a number of addresses throughout the State and country, but committed his thought to writing in a book bearing on religious matters. This work made a favorable impression upon persons among whom it circulated and paved the way for the authorship for Negro ministers in a field which very few had invaded.

In Petersburg during this period there labored another minister. This was Rev. Henry Williams of the Guilfield Baptist Church. He was doubtless the most influential Virginia Negro preacher of his time serving outside of Richmond. He came to the State from Ohio after emancipation. A man of keen foresight and more than usual intelligence, he easily took rank as a forceful religious worker. His church, which for generations had been a flourishing congregation, continued its growth under his direction and extended its influence into other channels of the life of the Negro. Living in the city where the Negro population outnumbered that of the whites, Mr. Williams quickly yielded to the temptation to try his fortune in politics. He figured prominently in various political conventions and held several positions. At

⁵⁹ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 237, 239.

one time he made a strenuous effort to secure the nomination for Congress, but because of the machine arrayed against him he failed to secure the majority in the nominating convention, although a preference was expressed for him by the leading Negroes and by the native whites. He ran, however, as an independent candidate only to be defeated. In politics, however, his record shows no shortcomings. On the other hand, he had much to his credit. He is still referred to today as the one most instrumental in having the public schools of Petersburg turned over to Negro teachers, whereas in other cities of the State inefficient white teachers have continued in the Negro schools.

Another minister, J. W. Dungee, was for a time influential among these workers; but he lost his influence among the Negroes when he championed the cause of the Conservative party. He had to give up his church work on this account. He suffered, moreover, from the attacks of other ministers who made it impossible for him to regain his prestige in the community. This drove him altogether into the camp of the native whites with whom he cooperated; and he had to seek his bread among them while fighting back at those who had barred the doors against him.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ *Dispatch*, Aug. 10, 15, Sept. 8, 1876; Feb. 20, June 22, Nov. 15, 1877.

CHAPTER XI

THE IMPRESSION THE CHURCH MADE

The most prominent of the talented Negroes during this period were ministers. That such a large number of them were suddenly brought into prominence is due to the fact that the religious work among the Negroes, which prior to the war had been controlled by the whites, was thrown open to the Negro leaders after emancipation. They entered upon the work in large numbers because of the opportunity for leadership in an independent atmosphere. Almost all other factors in the life of the Negro were either influenced or controlled from without by the native whites. In several of the large cities like Winchester, Staunton, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond, there were already large congregations housed in comfortable places for worship. Coming into the pastorate of a church thus established a Negro minister readily became an outstanding man in the community. It will be interesting then to note the impression which the church under such circumstances made.¹

Speaking of the Negro ministry, the *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* emphasized the need of the Richmond Institute and other such schools supported by the American Baptist Home Mission Society as a means of providing an intelligent ministry for Negro churches. Asserting that the mission of these schools has just begun the organ said: "The great mass of the colored preachers of the South are extremely ignorant; many of them, we are assured by the best testimony, do not know enough of the gospel to lead a poor, inquiring sinner to Jesus Christ for salvation."²

Among the pastors of many of these churches were found some of that class of hopelessly ignorant Negro ministers ob-

¹ *Freedmen's Record*, 1871, 111; *Dispatch*, Jan. 29, 1874, Jan. 2, Mar. 19, 1878, July 10, Feb. 16, 1880; William E. Hatcher, *John Jasper*, 17-18; *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, Mar. 1880, 41-42, 51.

² *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, Aug. 1878, 19.

served by many during these years.³ "Some of the colored preachers," said King in 1873, "although they make extravagant pretensions, are by no means so moral as our 'Fadder Quaker,' and, exercising absolute spiritual control over their ignorant flocks, prompt them to unworthy deeds, and fill their minds with wrong ideas. There is also a multitude of quacks and false prophets who seek to make money out of a revival of the barbaric superstitions still prevalent among certain classes of negroes.

"On one occasion a huge negro created quite a clamor among the blacks in Petersburg, by announcing that he could cure any one afflicted with disease. He practically revived many of the features of Voudouism, and was rapidly fleecing his victims, when a pitying white man interposed and tried to expose the swindler. But it was of no avail. The quack boldly challenged the would-be exposers to witness a cure of a long standing case of dropsy. At the house of the sick man the incredulous Caucasian found a large crowd of faithful believers assembled in front of a circle of bones, old rags, and other trash, over which the quack was muttering some gibberish. Finally the announcement was made that there was something in the sick man's bed which had made him ill; and, after a little search, a mysterious packet was found beneath the mattress.

"While the horror-stricken crowd were bewailing this evidence of witchcraft, the white man insisted on opening the packet, found it filled with harmless herbs and minerals, and endeavored to convince the negroes that the doctor's confederate had undoubtedly concealed it there. But they would not believe him, and insisted on considering the doctor great at divination, although their confidence was a little shaken when the man stricken with dropsy died, despite the discovery and removal of the hurtful charm."⁴

Referring to a special class, George Towle said: "The negro Methodist preachers are a characteristic and notable race, high flown and extravagant, never wanting at any time

³ *Report, Sup't of Public Instruction for 1874*, p. 153.

⁴ King, *The Great South*, 586-587. See also the *Dispatch*, Aug. 8, 1873.

in what the negroes call the 'gif of gab.'"⁵ With regard to whole class, Macrae said many were tragically ignorant. Yet, they often preached sermons full of earnestness and real power, showing that in spite of their lack of formal education they knew the true meaning of the gospel. "Some of the most vivid reproductions of Scripture narrative I have ever listened to," said Macrae, "were from the lips of such men, who might, under proper training, have become orators."⁶ Sir George Campbell thought the Negro preachers exaggerated the American style of public speaking just as American orators exaggerated the English style. But on the whole, he was edified by the Negro ministers who came "to the point" in a manner most refreshing when contrasted to the more formal procedure of some preachers.⁷

Referring to the ministry, McDonald said neither a profound knowledge of the scriptures nor a strict adherence to grammatical rules was a necessary qualification of a Negro preacher in the early years following the Civil War. On the other hand, the one who used the apt phrases, and the simple, though ungrammatical dialect was the more successful with his hearers. In order to reach the masses the preacher required a rapid flow of words, a vivid imagination, and the ability to connect the life of the present with that of the hereafter. Many preachers who succeeded admirably delivered their sermons in a "sing-a-song tone," interspersing their discourse frequently with an "Ah," as if catching their breath. Some of the "old time" white preachers were addicted to the same practice.⁸

H. T. Kealing considered the characteristic Negro ministers self-made men, possessed of considerable intelligence but deficient in learning. The most common fault in their discourse lay in the grammar. In their quiet, ordinary talk, they rarely made the verb agree with its subject in person and number. Yet, according to this writer, the representative Southern Negro minister was "a man of great native energy,

⁵ Towle, *American Society*, II, 216.

⁶ Macrae, *Americans at Home*, II, 108.

⁷ Campbell, *White and Black*, 131, 133.

⁸ McDonald, *Life in Old Virginia*, 217.

power and originality, hampered, but not stifled, by imperfect education, in the exercise of his powers, and in his ability to do." ⁹

Speaking of a good sermon as delivered by a Negro clergyman, Kealing said it might be divided into three parts. These were the introductory, the rational, and the emotional. The introductory was the stereotyped part. It consisted of making excuses because of hoarseness, asking the prayers of the congregation and such like. Next came the rational, comprising the written part of the discourse, carefully prepared and containing excellent thought and learned references. In this part the speaker brought together the beautiful and impressive that might attract the attention, but not too severely tax the minds of his auditors. Generally, reflections upon the prepared discourse suggested a thought leading the minister into an extemporaneous elaboration. This hurried him toward the emotional part of the sermon. Describing the process, Kealing said: "As he proceeds his manner becomes more animated, his gestures more energetic, his excursions more frequent, his voice more elevated, his imagination more active, his sentences more exclamatory, till he closes his Bible with a snap, and glides without a break, or a jar into the Emotional." ¹⁰ This part was a concession to the passing generation to whom a strictly intellectual effort was neither comforting nor edifying. But even the intelligent, said the writer, liked the emotional discourse. They listened thereto with renewed interest and tended to evaluate the sermon upon the basis of this final effort. ¹¹ On the contrary, some of the educated minority strongly disapproved the emotional sermon. They demanded that those who instructed from the pulpit should be the equal or superior of their auditors in training and intelligence. ¹²

⁹ H. T. Kealing, *The Colored Ministers of the South*, in the *A. M. E. Review*, I, 141.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1202.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹² *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, August (1880), 148. From the address of Professor J. E. Jones before the Anniversary celebration of the Home Mission Society at Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

From differing standpoints, observers have described the effects of such emotional sermons on the worshippers. Speaking of a scene in a Negro revival, Towle said the meeting, despite its solemn object, had a tinge of the ludicrous. The preachers and elders, he reported, spoke, shouted, threw up their arms, spasmodically clutched their hair and jumped frantically up and down. Here an excited woman leaped upon the benches and poured "out a hysterical confession of her sins, from the acknowledgment of the theft of a piece of mistress's butter to the staying away from meeting three Sundays before." There, two beings joined hands, danced hither and thither, gave sudden shouts, and finally groaned excitedly to each other. Everywhere there was "howling, crying, singing, the beating of breasts, frantic embracings, abject, grovelling on the floor, (and the) throwing out of arms." In the meantime, the preacher exhausted by his vehement exhortation sank to his seat.¹³

Writing of the protracted meetings in Tidewater Virginia, McDonald said two classes were always present. These were the "silent worshippers" and the "shouters." The former, zealous and devout, offered prayers in silence; but the latter, nervous and excited, were loud in their praises. They frequently interrupted the preacher in the midst of his discourse.¹⁴ Macrae observed that services conducted in camp meetings and in country churches tended much more to excitement than to edification. But in the Broad Street African Church of Richmond, he said, "the service was very much like that of a white congregation, saving in one or two particulars. The hymns were sung with unusual fervour, and where the last was given out the people began to grasp each others hands, singing all the time, and beginning to drift slowly out, much of the hand-shaking and singing going on after the people had got into the open air."¹⁵

Reports of workers among the freedmen corroborate in part

¹³ Towle, *American Society*, II, 217.

¹⁴ McDonald, *Life in Old Virginia*, 279.

¹⁵ Macrae, *Americans at Home*, II, 98.

what other observers have said of their religious practices.¹⁶ One worker, S. L. M. Conser, reorganized the Methodist

¹⁶ Describing one of these revivals, Edward King said in 1873: "Presently we arrived at a large frame building, much like a country school-house, save that it was neither ceiled nor plastered, and therein the revivalists were gathered. A powerful spiritual wave had swept over the colored population, and dozens of carts, loaded with dusky searchers for truth, came rolling along the rough roads, and stopped before the primitive door. Entering, we found represented every shade of color, from the coal black full-blood to the elegantly dressed and well-mannered octoroon. The congregation was not large. Owing to the excitement which had prevailed for several previous Sabbaths, many had retired, worn out, from the spiritual feast. The women sat on the left side, the men on the right of a broad aisle, running to a plain wooden pulpit, in which were three moon-faced negroes, two of them preachers, and the third a State Senator.

"In front of the pulpit, behind a little table, stood an olive-colored elderly man, neatly dressed, and with a wildness in his eyes, and an intensity written upon his lips which reminded me of what I had read of the 'Convulsionists of St. Médard.' The audience was breathless with attention as the preacher, a strolling missionary, supported by Quakers in Louisiana, took up the great Bible, and, poising it on his lean, nervous hand, poured forth such an impassioned appeal that I fairly trembled. I was not prepared for such vehemence. Never, in the history of New England revivalism, was there such a scene. The preacher stood with many of his hearers well around him; one of the deacons and exhorters, a black giant in spectacles, was his *point d'appui*, and to him he appealed from time to time, shaking him roughly by the shoulder, and hissing his words in his ear with fiery vehemence. The proposition with which he started was somewhat incomprehensible to us, viz.: 'Christ is the creating power of God'; but the proposition was of no consequence, because every few moments he would burst into paroxysms of exhortation, before which the emotional audience rocked and trembled like reeds in a wind. He had a peculiar way of addressing himself suddenly and in a startling manner to some individual in the congregation, dancing, and pounding the table furiously with both hands, in the agony of his exhortation to that person.

"From time to time he would draw in his breath with great force, as if repressing a sob, and, when speaking of love and salvation, he inevitably fell into a chant, or monotone, which was very effective. Under the hurricanes of his appeal, the fury of his shouting, the magnetic influence of his song, one of the old deacons went into a spasm of religious fervor, and now and then yelled vociferously. A milder brother ventured to remonstrate, whereupon the Quaker preacher turned upon him, saying loudly:

"'Let dat brudder shout, an' 'tend to dine own business!'

"Then he began preaching against hypocrisy. He seemed especially to chide the women for becoming converted with too great ease. 'Woe!' he cried, 'woe unto dat woman what goes down into the water befo' she ready; woe unto her!' with a long, singing descent on the last words; and then he added, *sotto voce*, 'Dat what make so many women come up stranglin' an' vomitin' an' pukin' outen de water; de debbil dat still in 'em git hole on 'em, an' shake 'em an' choke 'em under de water! Let no woman shout for Jesus what don't know

Episcopal Church in Virginia after the war. Referring to his experiences he said: "The colored people . . . in some

'bout Jesus! It's one thing to git to Heaven, but it's anudder to git in! Don' ye know what Heaven is? Heaven's God! We must know what we is preachin' about, an' ef we don't we ought to SET DOWN! (This with terrific emphasis.)

"In describing the creation, he said: 'Bredden, it's now 12,877 years sence de good Lord made de world, an' de morning stars sung togedder. *Dat wa'n't yesterday!* Ha! read de Book o' Job, 'n see for yerself! *Dat wa'n't a month ago! I wasn't dar den!*' (thus illustrating with sublime scorn the littleness of man), 'but by de grace of God, I'll git dar by'n'by!' (here his voice was faint and suggestive of tearful joy) 'to join de mornin' stars, an' we'll all sing togedder!

"Oh, yes! oh, yes! Heaven's God made de world an' de fullness darof, an' hung it up on de high hooks of heaven. Dar wa'n't no nails dar; no hammer dar; no nothin' but de word of God.' In hinting at the terrors of death to the unconverted, he sang wild word-pictures which had a certain rude force even for us, and then shrieked out these sentences: 'Ef de brudders don't want to die in de dark, dey must git Christ to hole de candle. God's grace shall be de candle in de good brudder's heart. Devils may howl, lions may roar, but nothin' shall daunt dat brudder's heart. Angels shall come down with lighted candles in deir hands to congratulate de brudder.' Then, once more screaming and dancing and weeping, he uttered these words: 'Die right, brudder, 'n' yo' shall not die in de night; yo' shall die in eternal day. Ef Christ don't bring light enough, den God will come wid his candle; an' ef dat ain't enough, den de Holy Ghost'll come wid his candle, too, an' dar can't be no more night wid dat brudder's soul.'

"At another period in the sermon, he said: 'Ef we can't preach God, we can exhort Him; ef we can't exhort Him, we can live Him; an' ef we can't live Him, we can die Him. I've served under Him forty-two long year—longer dan Moses led Israel in de wilderness; an' ef I don' know what God is, den I'd better shut up an' go home!!! Jesus snatched my soul from hell forty-two year ago in Fredericksburg, in old Vaginny! Praise Him! O Praise Him! Let no brudder shout for Jesus who don' know Jesus.'

"After the more furious passages of exhortation were over, he gave his ideas upon prayer, something in this wise: 'Dar was ole Fadder Jupiter (a colored preacher). Now Jupiter he used to git a Bible in one han' an' a pra'r-book in anudder, an' a hymn-book under his arm; an' den he'd start out to see de widders 'n' de fadderless; 'n' one day I met old Fadder Jupiter, 'n' I say to him: "Fadder Jupiter, how many pounds of meat have yo' prayed? How many pounds of sugar have yo' exhorted? How many cups of coffee have yo' sung to dem pore widders 'n' fadderless?" 'N' he says: "Not one." 'N' den I say: "'Pears like, Fadder Jupiter, yo'll sing here, and pray dar, 'n' yo'll pray every widder to death 'n' sing every fadderless child to de grave; 'n' call in help to bury 'em." 'N' den I told him dat when he sung he must call a bar'l o' flour long metre, 'n' fur short metre he must take a keg of lard, 'n' dat's short enough, anyhow; and fur partieler metre nice ham 'n' some coffee; 'n' den he mus' take de Quaker pra'r-book, a two-wheeled cart, 'n' fill up de ole Pra'r-book with coal; 'n' when de col' wedder come he must drive de ole pra'r-book down to some widder sister's, 'n' say: "Sister, I've come to pray six bushels of coal with yo',

localities allowed their emotions to impel them into the wildest fanaticism." Among those loyal to the Methodist Episcopal Church and looking to him for moral advice and supervision, Conser found many spiritualists and firm believers in the most extreme supernatural. "In their extravagant devotions they sometimes fell into trances and cataleptic fits and professed to see visions of angels and demons, and many of them departed masters in the dark regions reaping the reward of their cupidity in advocating and practicing slavery. . . . These spasmodic excesses," Conser admitted, "were not confined to colored people," but were common to undeveloped peoples just embracing Christianity.¹⁷

Writing in 1870, however, Susan H. Clark, a missionary teacher of Negroes at Church Hill, stated that superstition was passing away and that the candidates examined for admittance to the church were asked pertinent questions in 'n' den open de cellar door, dump de ole pra'r-book, 'n' pray de cellar full o' eoal.'

"The sermon was interspersed with impassioned recitations from Watts and Wesley. There was no logic, and no clear idea of anything except the love of God and charity. Now and then, with pompous air, the speaker would say: 'An' now, bredden, we will proceed to consider de third (or fourth or fifth) point, and after a moment of solemn cogitation, would plunge into exhortation, appeal, and sarcasm, and yell until the rafters rang. His face was convulsed, and sobs shook his whole frame when he sat down. A strange wild hymn was sung, the singers waving their bodies to and fro to the measure of the music.

"One of the ministers then arose, and bade those who desired the prayers of the church to come forward and lay their sins upon the altar. An indescribable rush of some twenty persons ensued. Old men and young girls hastened together to the pulpit, and knelt with their faces bowed upon their hands, and a low tremulous prayer to 'O my Heavenly Fadder,' was heard, as one of the old deacons poured forth his soul in supplication. During the prayer an exhorter passed around among the congregation, singling out the impenitent, and personally addressing them: 'Yo' better go now!' 'How'll yo' feel when it's too late, 'n' dar ain't no gittin dar?' In a short time the church resounded to groans and prayers, high over all of which was heard the clear voice of the colored Quaker chanting:

"For everywhar I went to pray
"I met all hell right on my way,'

'but Heaven's God, 'n' we'll get dar by'n'by. O praise Him! O bless Him, 'n' sing wid de mornin' stars!'"—King, *The Great South*, 583–586.

¹⁷ Conser, *Virginia After the War: An Account of Three Years Experience in Reorganizing the Methodist Episcopal Church in Virginia at the Close of the Civil War*, 40.

contrast to the erroneous and irrelevant ones asked four years before.¹⁸ But General Armstrong was less optimistic concerning the religious development of the Negroes about Hampton. Referring to their worship, he said: "In the absolute it is imperfect, inconsistent, discouraging; but relatively, all things considered, it is, I think the best that the light he has had, the opportunities he has not had, and the vices of slavery made possible. It is all expression, demonstration, ecstasy; but God made him with an acute religious sensibility. The highest exercise of his highest powers is a paroxysm—to us; to him, normal and healthy action." Yet this religion, said Armstrong, "has comforted the sick, and those in prison; it has consoled and lifted up the sorrowing; it has transformed their lives from wretchedness to happiness."¹⁹

Referring to the "acknowledged religiousness" of Negroes, W. H. Ruffner said: "Occasionally a high type of piety is manifested by individuals; and while there is a great deal of religious sincerity and earnestness among them, and whilst the style of piety is modified by the character of the religious instruction they have received; and whilst families and congregations which have enjoyed special privileges, exhibit better results, yet with the masses of those who claim to be Christians their piety is of an unintelligent, sometimes superstitious, and always spasmodic type; and it covers multitude of sins."²⁰

Despite the extreme defects of the freedmen's piety, it was genuine. It possessed an experience of pardoned sin, a consciousness of acceptance with God, and the realization of the consolations of the Holy Ghost. According to the report of Freedmen's Aid Society for 1875, emotion as well as thought was essential to piety, and religious development was scarcely less dependent upon thinking than feeling. "For this reason, the emotional religion of the freedmen should not be indiscriminately condemned for it was the only religion

¹⁸ *American Missionary*, Oct. 1870, 218.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 229, 230.

²⁰ *Annual Reports, Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1874*, 153.

qualified to meet the needs of a large class in the world. The freedmen's religion, moreover, was largely what slavery had made it. And it should not be inferred that they were not Christians because they were "defective in character and inconsistent in life, boisterous and fanatical in worship." Beneath all there was "deep penitence, strong faith, and unshaken confidence in God."²¹

It will be interesting to consider to what extent the church improved the morals of the freedmen. It is conceded that the moral life of the freedmen was determined mainly by the influence slavery exerted upon it. Slavery might have been less brutal in Virginia than in the far South, but everywhere the institution exerted a degrading, dehumanizing influence upon the slaves. In Virginia, family life among the slaves disintegrated because of the emphasis planters placed on breeding slaves for the markets, after unscientific agriculture had impoverished the lands. This induced a laxity in sexual relations between slaves. In general slaves were not permitted to own property. Hence they had no opportunity to develop respect for property rights as evidenced by numerous petty thefts. The slave was subjected to despotic rule and arbitrary punishment without an unbiased hearing. Thus he developed the vices of deception and outright falsehood in order to escape corporal punishment. Moreover, the Negro gambled and drank because the white people whom he took as models practiced these things. Such vices a minority of the Negroes carried over from slavery to freedom.

Referring to the slow moral growth among the Negro, the American Missionary Association expressed alarm over the condition of Negro women. At first seriously concerned over the emotional religion and intemperance of the freedmen, the Association said in its report for 1869: "Slavery systematically attempted, and with terrible success, to obliterate from (the minds of Negro women) the instinct of chastity." As a result of this policy destitution quickly drove many to sexual immorality as a means of support.²²

²¹ *Report, 1875, Freedmen's Aid Society*, 9, 10, 11.

²² *Report, 1869, 13, 14; Enquirer, July 10, 1866.*

Speaking of the character of the Negro in 1874, Edward King said the rural Negro was generally honest and seldom committed crime when not under the influence of whiskey. When idle in the cities, he believed the Negroes became vicious. But King regarded the Negroes not entitled to recognition as a moral race. They did not condemn adultery as the whites appeared to do. Some opposed marriage. Many had begun to consider illegitimate offspring a cause for reproach. King was satisfied that they related religion neither to morality nor to life.²³

Speaking in 1874, W. H. Ruffner, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, said: "The southern negroes are polite, amiable, quiet, orderly, and religious; and hence it is hard to believe that as a class they are without moral character. And yet such is the unhappy fact."²⁴ Continuing, Ruffner said: "They are without moral stamina—that is, whilst not ignorant of moral maxims, they are without firmness of moral principle. Hence they practically live very immoral lives, and particularly in respect to that class of vices which are characteristic of the prognathous race, but of the people as a class."²⁵ According to Ruffner, "they have the vices which characterized slaves in all time, some of which are aggravated by their idiosyncrasy."²⁶ Nevertheless Ruffner noted progress in their moral development for he said: "I am much gratified to observe a tendency to improve in this respect, particularly where faithful and enlightened teachers, both religious and secular, have been laboring among them. There is more regular family life than formerly. And there are large numbers of boys and girls now under good training in our schools, who show a strong disposition to live respectable lives."²⁷

Some years later, the Reverend A. Binga, Jr., a Negro minister of Manchester, expressed alarm over the moral

²³ King, *The Great South*, 778-782.

²⁴ *Annual Reports, Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1874*, 148.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

condition of the Negroes. He thought they had deteriorated below the standard of native Africans. "Among the Negroes here," said Binga, "vice has been enthroned and virtue debased." Negro men had not been taught to regard the marriage vows as sacred, or the protection of their wives and daughters a duty. Binga believed that the missionary societies had done much to ameliorate the condition, but their work was not sufficient. Negro society, he felt, must be reconstructed by elements from within rather than by influences from without. He believed that by making Christian higher education accessible to the women of the race high ideals of morality might be attained.²⁸ Unlike Binga, Sir George Campbell thought the Negroes had already made moral progress. He believed that religious education had developed character and self-reliance in the freemen. And he felt that the lessons taught in the management of their churches comprised a valuable training in character-building.²⁹

Such an observer as Campbell recognized the difficult task of the Negro church. Because of the undeveloped state of the freedmen, the institution could not be expected to make of them models of morality, or of Christian consistency, in a short while. Besides, the limitations of the church were clearly manifested in the meagre training and limited capacity of the majority of the clergy. Too often the blind endeavored to lead to the blind. Finally the work of the Negro church when compared with that of other churches did not suffer severely, for the Negro did not differ from other races in that his conduct was inconsistent with his religious profession. Rarely, if ever, have Christian peoples regulated their conduct in strict accord with Christian principles. On the contrary, advanced peoples have interpreted Christianity so as to justify their particular conduct, or ignored Christianity in carrying out their desires.

On the whole, the church was a potent directive force in the development of the Negro. The student of history will

²⁸ *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (March, 1880), 41-42.

²⁹ Campbell, *White and Black*, 131-133.

make a grave mistake in thinking that it was altogether unprogressive. On the contrary, the church was the main factor in the progress of the Negro.³⁰ In it the Negro was baptized, his wedding ceremony was performed, and from it he was buried. In addition to the primary function as a house of worship, the church became a social center for the freedmen. In other words, the church served as the theatre, the forum, and the general meeting house of the Negro community. Forbidden to meet under such circumstances during the days of slavery, the Negro naturally tended to meet there in freedom. Impelled by various motives, then, practically all Negroes were church-goers. On Sundays, some went, no doubt, for the specific and single purpose of religious worship. Practically all went with the expectation of meeting friends and making acquaintances. Besides the preaching services, the Sunday School, the Young Men's Christian Association, prayer meetings, class meetings and the like, attracted special groups. On the week days and evenings, lectures, debates, socials, entertainments, musicals and festivals provided some of the occasions that brought Negroes thither. Church conferences, political conventions, meetings of fraternal organizations, business meetings of the church, and of committees of the home missions or foreign missions church societies, attracted others. To the church all Negroes ambitious for independent leadership had to look, inasmuch as other institutions touching the life of the Negro were controlled or directed by the whites.

Political meetings, as mentioned above, were also held in Negro churches. In fact, some of the leading politicians freely participating in the reconstruction of Virginia were Negro ministers, like J. P. Evans and Henry Williams, Jr. To the average student this may seem to be a sad commentary on the religious life of the Negro. A second thought, how-

³⁰ This statement is based on an actual study of the churches themselves and in part on newspaper references showing organizations meeting in churches. See *Dispatch*, Oct. 31, 1871; Feb. 2, 1872; Feb. 17, 1876; Jan. 2, 1878; Jan. 1, 1879; and the *Enquirer*, Aug. 24, 1825. The *Dispatch* of Jan. 1, 1879, points out six or eight debating and literary societies that originated in connection with the churches.

ever, will disabuse a fair mind of such an idea. The meeting-houses of the Negroes were the only places where they were permitted to hold political meetings. Inasmuch as they affiliated with the party opposing the reduction of the Negro to serfdom, the whites who owned the buildings in which such meetings might be held refused to rent them for such purposes immediately after the emancipation. If the Negro churches had not opened their doors to the political conventions of the reconstructionists, they would have had no place at all for such meetings except in the open air. It should be remembered, too, that many Negro churches and pastors refused to participate in politics. Some of them would not allow political notices to be read in their churches.³¹

Decidedly unbecoming does it seem nowadays for a minister to take an active part in politics except in the case of some reform movement which a party may happen to champion. The activity of the Negro minister in politics during the reconstruction may be accounted for in this very way. The elevation of the freedman to citizenship and the protection of him in the enjoyment of his rights impressed the Negro minister, not as an opportunity to figure in politics, but to do justice to a class long since despised and rejected of men. Of course, there were Negro preachers who took a part in the political matters merely to obtain money or office. These, however, were exceptions to the rule. The large majority of Negro ministers in Virginia had something to do with the rehabilitation of the State by close cooperation with the supposed champions of freedom, but there is no record to show that any large percentage of these ministers were corrupt. Here they answered the call to duty in a crisis when they were the best prepared persons to respond.

³¹ *Dispatch*, July 6, 1876.

CHAPTER XII

THE CONTEST FOR PRIORITY IN RECONSTRUCTION

While these social forces were at work, politics tended to occupy the foreground and to complicate all other matters. Before the convention to frame a constitution in accordance with the policy of Congress could meet the campaign for control of the State was in progress. Peirpont was removed as Governor and H. H. Wells was appointed in his place. Wells hoped to succeed himself by popular election. In this he was opposed by James W. Hunnicutt. Arrangements for the registration of electors commenced after the passage of the measure of March 23, 1867. General Schofield, the military commander of Virginia, appointed a board to select suitable persons as officers of registration. The presidents of boards of registration were army officers detailed for that purpose.¹ Prior to this time, the freedmen relying upon the act of March 2, 1867, had undertaken to vote in a municipal election held in Alexandria. State and municipal officers differed concerning the right of the Negroes to vote in this election. Federal officers gave no decisive answer to officials consulting them. The commissioners of election, therefore, refused the Negroes' votes aggregating 1,400. As a result of hostile comment arising from this action, General Schofield suspended local elections pending the completion of registration. Vacancies occurring in county or city offices were supplied by temporary appointments of the military commander upon recommendations of the county court or city council and upon that of the president of the board of registration for the county or city.²

Meanwhile, active electioneering commenced before eligibility for voting and office holding had been finally established.

¹ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*, 398.

² *Enquirer*, March 8, 1867; Appleton's *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1867, 758; Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 398.

There were two political factions in the State. One consisted of the majority of native whites and a few Negroes, led by aristocratic spokesmen and former Confederates. This was the reactionary group whose leaders had failed to reconstruct the State despite the control they had exercised since the war. The reactionaries were committed to the rule of privileged classes, and they opposed the innovation of democratic rule. To them the enfranchisement of the Negroes, their elevation to the status of office-holding and jury service, the support of popular education by the State, and the disfranchisement of Confederate leaders,—all of which reconstruction by Congress contemplated,—were outrages. They regarded the reconstruction measures unconstitutional, and determined to defeat the convention, if possible. They preferred military rule to “Negro domination,” and hoped to obtain during the continuance of such rule a plan of restoration acceptable to the native whites.³

The other political faction consisted of somewhat heterogeneous liberal elements. These were the Negroes, Northern whites in Virginia, and natives who had been loyal during the war or who had become Republicans thereafter.⁴ Within this faction there were divergent groups. The less liberal element was led by John Minor Botts who had consistently opposed unlimited Negro suffrage prior to its adoption as a Republican party measure. The more advanced element was led by James W. Hunnicutt, a politician of radical tendencies. He was a native of South Carolina, but for some time had lived in Fredericksburg, functioning as a clergyman and editor of a religious journal. To discredit him with the Negroes it was reported that Hunnicutt had been a slaveholder, and had supported the rebellion. Having become early reconstructed, however, Hunnicutt became a fearless champion of the oppressed people in the State. Promoting this cause through his speeches and writings in his *New Nation*, Hunnicutt became a popular leader among the

³ See *Enquirer* and *Dispatch* and extracts of Virginia newspapers therein, February to May, 1867.

⁴ *Enquirer*, Sept. 27, 1867.

freedmen, advocating unrestricted civil and political rights.⁵ He, therefore, soon supplanted Botts as the Virginia champion of the Republican party.⁶

According to critics, Hunnicutt made a characteristically incendiary speech on the occasion of the emancipation day celebration held in Richmond in April, 1867. It was reported that Hunnicutt opposed the imposition of a tax on persons, and advocated free schools to be supported by a tax on land. He urged Negroes to register in order to vote in the fall elections. Where they were organized, he said, they should elect "a loyal Governor and loyal Congressmen." Negroes were advised not to support white men who had opposed their liberty. Union men also should be tested. Those refusing to sit in a constitutional convention with Negroes should not be supported for office. Negroes who voted for rebels invited the perpetuity of the whipping post, the chain gang, and the vagrant law. Hunnicutt regarded with suspicion the praise of Negroes emanating from journals which formerly abused and ridiculed them. He counselled unity of action among the blacks and expressed the hope that whites and Negroes might live together in harmony.⁷

Under the leadership of Hunnicutt, the State Convention, called by the Republican State Central Committee, met at Richmond on April 17, 1867. There were present from forty-nine counties two hundred and ten delegates, including one hundred and sixty Negroes. "Some of the Negroes were intelligent looking men and neatly attired."⁸ These Negroes, moreover, did not come as observers. Taking an active part in matters, some made indiscreet speeches, while others spoke to the point with rare soundness. Many discussed the question of confiscation, in consequence of the introduction of a resolution to approve the Confiscation Act of July, 1862. J. H. Wilson of Norfolk, who offered the resolution, wanted Congress either to repeal the measure or impeach President

⁵ *Enquirer*, Dec. 31, 1866; April 17, Aug. 15, 1867.

⁶ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1867, for comments of New York *Tribune* and New York *Times* on Hunnicutt; see the *Nation*.

⁷ Richmond *Times*, April 4, 1867.

⁸ *Enquirer*, April 18, 1867.

Johnson for not enforcing it. Other Negroes strongly opposed the confiscation of the property of the Confederates. John Oliver, referred to as the "most genteel and intelligent looking man in the house," told his Negro brethren that they were too weak to enforce any claim against the whites. He urged them to work, not through passion, but with their brains. R. D. Beckley of Alexandria registered opposition to either disfranchisement or confiscation. Fields Cook of Richmond regretted "the spirit of intolerance which seemed to prevail among the rural delegates, who needed to be taught as children." Cook desired for Negroes only the rights granted to others. He would accept a farm should Congress offer one, but he strongly opposed confiscation. Cook warned the Negroes against any ill-advised measures approving confiscation. As a result of the efforts of these spokesmen, resolutions proposing confiscation were laid on the table.⁹

The convention adopted the work of the committee on resolutions. These thanked Congress for the reconstruction act, adopted as a platform the principles of the Republican party, maintained the equal protection of all before the courts, upheld the right of all to hold office, advocated education at public expense, equitable taxation, new usury laws, and the recognition of all men as free and equal. The resolutions too were so worded as to unite the party by binding its adherents to the support of their orthodox partisans only, but at the same time sought to attract the white laboring classes. This made Hunnicutt the man of the hour. He had gained the ascendancy among the Negroes.

A speech made by Hunnicutt in connection with the convention may be considered with interest. Hunnicutt denied that he had given the Negroes advice detrimental to the whites. He asserted that the Negroes were the bone and sinew of the land, but the pay they received was inadequate. This was an imposition that should not be permitted to continue. He opposed a white landed aristocracy. He opposed injustice to the Negroes in the courts. Whites, he said, were not executed for murdering Negroes, but Negroes

⁹ *Enquirer*, April 19, 1867.

were hanged for killing whites. Hunnicutt opposed the restitution of the State to native white control. He asserted that Peirpont was a political disloyalist and should not be trusted. He flayed the legislature, stating that its sentiment was attested in the passage of the vagrant law, galling alike to poor whites and Negroes. Summing up his contentions, Hunnicutt stated that he did not desire to place Negroes above whites, but he believed that whites and Negroes should be accorded exactly equal rights.¹⁰

At this time the influence of Hunnicutt was feared as a destructive force. Discussing the question, the *New York Tribune* said: "Far be it from us to advise a campaign of bitterness. We do not propose to influence the negro by exciting in his mind a hatred of his former masters. Nor should we advise any organization antagonistic to those masters. Agitators like Mr. Hunnicutt in Virginia may mean well, but their zeal is bitter and offensive. To organize a campaign on the Hunnicutt plan is to abandon any hope of a permanent Union party in the South. We cannot afford to array the white against the black, or the black against the white."¹¹ According to the *Enquirer* of April 20, 1867, Thurlow Weed said "the course of Hunnicutt is to be seriously reprobated."¹²

In this state of affairs the national Republican party sent into the State, Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, to harmonize discordant party elements. Senator Wilson spoke in several towns. In Richmond, he appealed to various classes to unite in the effort to reconstruct the State along the lines indicated by Congress. Wilson urged a coalition of forces including colored men, unconditional Union men, old Whigs, and those who, forced into the rebellion against their will, abandoned it before the war had ended. Wilson wanted them to elect trustworthy men to the Constitutional Convention and to Congress. He believed that a policy of fidelity to principle and inflexible firmness, of trust

¹⁰ Reported in *Richmond Times*, April 18, 1867.

¹¹ *Enquirer*, April 15, 1867.

¹² *Ibid.*, April 20, 1867.

and liberality would bring victory to the cause their hearts loved and their judgments approved.¹³

Senator Wilson's effort was unsuccessful, but it gave stimulus to the efforts of certain Negro leaders to harmonize the whites and Negroes. Early in April, Lewis Lindsay had addressed the Negroes urging wisdom and moderation in the exercise of suffrage. He advised them to support loyal men for office, but not to repel former Confederates to whom they were deeply indebted for benefits in the past. Commenting thereupon, the *Richmond Times* said: "Lindsay's speech was conservative in its character and plainly showed the superiority of a well-raised negro over those whose only forte is prejudice and insolence."¹⁴

On April 15, 1867, however, the Negroes went further. A committee, consisting of Solon Johnson, Wyatt Lewis, Henry Baldwin, Charles Carter and Edwin Braxton, arranged for Marmaduke Johnson, Wm. H. Macfarland, and R. T. Daniel, prominent native whites, to address the Richmond Negroes concerning their duties and responsibilities as citizens. In introducing the speakers, Solon Johnson stated the Negroes should hear the side of the native whites before choosing a political course. The speeches were kindly received despite the remark of Marmaduke Johnson that employers might proscribe Negroes who would vote against the native whites.¹⁵

Following closely upon this there was held a meeting at Petersburg called by influential white citizens. This meeting resulted from a movement led by the *Richmond Whig*, urging the cooperation of Union men, reconstructed Confederates, and Negroes to restore the State to the Union through the agency of the Republican party. Recognizing that the Republican party controlled the government, the *Whig* urged that the State could be restored only by a frank acceptance of the Congressional Reconstruction policy.¹⁶ In line with this proposal, the Petersburg meeting adopted resolutions pledging compliance with the terms prescribed by

¹³ *Enquirer*, April 23, 1867.

¹⁴ *Times*, April 4, 1867. See also *Enquirer*, April 27, 1867.

¹⁵ *Enquirer*, April 16, 1867.

¹⁶ *Whig*, April 5 and April 22, 1867.

Congress for the readmission of Virginia to the Union, and acknowledging the equality of all men before the law, "both in respect to political privileges and power, and of civil rights."¹⁷ The Petersburg declaration attracted attention in several localities including Charlottesville, Cape Charles, and Amelia. Whites and Negroes were equally zealous in subscribing to these resolutions.¹⁸ Yet they failed of statewide support because they were far too liberal for acceptance by the reactionary whites.

The movement for cooperation was checked also by certain events transpiring soon thereafter in Richmond. Late in April, several Negroes decided to break down the segregation of the races on the street cars. This provoked a violent disturbance in which policemen removed the blacks,¹⁹ but the discrimination had to cease. A few days later, on May 6, Judge John C. Underwood, considered a strict partisan of the Negroes, convened the United States Circuit Court at Richmond. Judge Underwood summoned six Negroes to serve on the grand jury. These included George Seaton, Cornelius L. Harris, George Simms, Dulaney Beckley, Fields Cook and John Oliver. Cook and Oliver were considered intelligent men with conservative inclinations.²⁰ Yet their appointment to jury service was deplored by the whites. To this jury, moreover, Underwood delivered a charge considered incendiary.²¹ On May 10, Underwood impanelled twelve Negroes on the petit jury of the Circuit Court before which he summoned Jefferson Davis to appear. The whites considered this an outrage. Meanwhile on May 10, a collision occurred between Negroes and a policeman who was brutally assaulting a Negro under arrest. The next day a similar affair happened. In each instance, the military forces were called to disperse a disorderly mob of Negroes and whites, and restore quiet. Further excitement was furnished by Zedekiah K. Hayward, a New Englander, who, on May 10,

¹⁷ *Whig*, May 1, 1867.

¹⁸ *Dispatch*, April 19, 20, 24, 25, 1867.

¹⁹ *Enquirer*, April 25, 1867.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 18, 1867, and *Times*, May 17, 1867.

²¹ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1867.

1867, was arrested, charged with inciting the Negroes to "acts of violence, insurrection and war." It was reported that Hayward had urged Negroes to assert their rights to indiscriminate equality and public privileges with whites, and to "have a high carnival" after sympathetic whites had left the State.²²

The interpretations placed upon these events by the whites and the Negroes differed widely. In them, the Negroes saw the unyielding opposition of the whites to equal rights and equal public privileges for the blacks. The whites considered them evidences of social unrest among the Negroes stimulated by radical agitators. Commenting upon the situation, the *Richmond Times* expressed the consensus of press opinion thus: "The violent state of feeling in Richmond is abnormal and not the result of the changed relations of the two races. It has been brought about entirely by the infamous speeches which have been delivered almost nightly to vast crowds of deluded negroes, at their churches and public meetings. It is peculiar to those Southern cities, where the efforts of Radical incendiaries have been persistent and most flagitious." Relating its observations of country districts, the *Times* said: "Upon the plantations, at the country stores, and at the usual places of public resort, the intercourse of the blacks and whites was marked by courtesy, kindness and good feeling. The farmer spoke for the most part in terms of praise of the improving industry and honesty of the freedmen, and the blacks were excited and disturbed by no thought of social equality with their late masters. What we saw was simply a quiet, industrious agricultural community which had not been disturbed by almost daily and nightly teachings of itinerant agitators."²³

The freedmen, however, still hoped that reconciliation might succeed. Shortly thereafter, the *Times*, commenting upon "gratifying evidence of the good effects of recent occurrences of this sort in Richmond," expressed the opinion that the native whites and Negroes were about to be drawn

²² See the *Dispatch* and the *Enquirer*, May 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 1867.

²³ *Richmond Times*, May 15, 1867.

together. Continuing the journal said: "We understand that a number of the latter (the most intelligent colored population) are endeavoring to persuade some of the best known white citizens to deliver addresses to them at intervals between this time and the time at which our elections may be ordered."²⁴

The freedmen arranged a political meeting at Amelia Court House at which prominent whites had agreed to speak. Fields Cook and John Oliver spoke in behalf of the Negroes. Oliver urged the Negroes to send right thinking men to the Constitutional Convention. He was somewhat skeptical of the good faith of the former masters who had fought to perpetuate slavery. But he was specific on the question of "social equality." He wanted none of it. Oliver believed that whites and blacks should be free to choose their personal associates, but he desired equal public privileges with the whites. He opposed confiscation, and he urged the Negroes to let industry, thrift and propriety characterize their lives.²⁵

At this time, however, the reconstructionists were about to become hopelessly divided. John Minor Botts, Governor Peirpont, and other less liberal Republican leaders had proclaimed their refusal to recognize the validity of the Richmond convention of April 17, asserting that it was not representative of their reconstruction party.²⁶ There went forth, then, from more than 300 prominent men, a call for a convention for reorganization to meet at Charlottesville on July 4. The adherents of Hunnicutt were not invited to cooperate. This caused a crisis, which could be met only by the intervention of the Reconstruction Committee.²⁷ Mediators were sent from the North to meet with about fifty warring State leaders in a conference held in Richmond on June 16, 1868. After both sides had told their stories it was decided to compromise by holding a convention at Richmond on August 1 to draw up a new party platform.

²⁴ *Times*, May 17, 1867.

²⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, May 25, 1867.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1867.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, May 21, 1867.

The Hunnicutt faction had won a victory with the aid of the Negroes devoted to him, for he could easily control the convention in midst of so many firm Negro supporters. Yet, the less advanced liberal leaders still hoped to wrest party leadership from Hunnicutt. Many Virginians, regarding it useless to continue the struggle, however, desired to return to the Union under the conditions imposed by Congress. They reasoned that once within the Union the State could control its local affairs. The astute white politicians could readily adjust matters so as to give the Negroes every legal right, without permitting them to exercise any but the right to vote. Thus the movement for cooperation was revived largely through the efforts of the *Richmond Whig*, supported by many considered antagonistic to the Union.²⁸

This effort culminated in a meeting at Charlottesville on July, 1, 1867. Former Confederates dominated the meeting.²⁹ The meeting adopted resolutions setting forth that having consented in good faith to the reconstruction of the Southern States under the Sherman-Shellabarger bill, they considered themselves as bound in honor to the unconditioned maintenance of the Union of these States, and that they regarded the welfare of Virginia and of the other Southern States as requiring that their people should cooperate with the party that will give them protection for life and property. Believing that the Republican party of the United States alone had the power to give them protection, they desired to cooperate with it.³⁰ Delegates were elected to the convention to be held in Richmond on August 1, 1867. Virginians were urged to elect to the Constitutional Convention men of character and intelligence, whose attachments to the Union would give assurance of a hearty cooperation in the permanent reestablishment of the unity of the American people.³¹

The Albermarle meeting led to "cooperation" meetings elsewhere. Citizens of other counties including Bucking-

²⁸ *Whig*, June 2, 6, 24, 25, 1867.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1867.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1867.

³¹ *Enquirer*, July 3, 1867.

ham, Charlotte, Amelia, Louisa, Pittsylvania, Halifax, Rappahannock, Prince Edward, and Smythe endorsed the Albermarle resolutions. Thus the movements became ³² widespread prior to the convention. Drawing its support from the less confirmed ex-Confederates, the movement threatened to rend the solidarity of the whites. But the reactionaries were not moved by love of the Negro. They saw that Negro suffrage was inevitable. They therefore sought the support of the Negroes in a party led by the native whites.³³ By this means the effects of reconstruction might be greatly minimized. The Negroes would be granted the right to vote as instructed; but, in the exercise of other rights, they would be greatly restricted.

From the point of view of the Hunnicutt followers, then, the success of the cooperation movement promised disastrous results. It would restore the State under reactionary native white control. This prospect was repugnant to white Republicans who would be shorn of future political leadership. The Negroes, moreover, did not trust the reactionaries. The latter had opposed the Civil Rights Law, the comprehensive Freedmen's Bureau Law of July 16, 1866, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Furthermore, despite their practical control of the government since the war, they had been unable to reconstruct the State on any basis of Negro suffrage. The Negroes reasoned, too, that the whites proffered cooperation merely in order to gain power and dominate the blacks. But entitled to equal political and civil rights with the whites, the Negroes were not disposed to accept inferior advantages so long as equal rights might be had. This position Lewis Lindsay, one of the foremost Negro leaders, took in a fiery speech at Charlottesville on the second day of July, advocating social, civic and political privileges of the Negro without any restriction whatever.

On the day before the convention scheduled for the first of August, an assembly of conservative Republicans approved a set of resolutions presented by John Minor Botts. These

³² *Enquirer*, July 6, 1867; *Whig*, July 9, 23, 25, Aug. 1, 1867.

³³ *Whig*, July 5, 1867.

resolutions declared that secession was treason and should be punished; that the first allegiance of every citizen is to his country; that education at public expense should be provided for all; and that impartial suffrage and equality in all political and legal rights, without regard to color, should be established. These resolutions, moreover, advocated freedom of speech, the recognition and perpetuation of universal liberty, the payment of the public debt except the Confederate which should be repudiated, the necessity to elevate and give respectability to labor, a liberal system of internal improvements for the full development of the State's resources, and the restoration of all political and civil rights to all Confederates except the leaders who should be excluded from political power and adequately punished.³⁴

On August 1, the Republican convention assembled in the African Baptist Church. According to press reports, Richmond Negroes, obeying orders of Hunnicutt, packed the church. The "cooperation" delegates, John Minor Botts and many Negroes, did not gain access to the church. The convention consisted of representatives of certain Negroes supplemented by fifty white participants who sat in the April convention. Hunnicutt dominated the church convention. Those who could not enter the church went to the Capitol Square where John Hawxhurst was appointed temporary chairman. The committee to report permanent officers recommended the reappointment of all officers of the April convention; and that the platform of the convention be re-adopted without change. These proposals, voted upon separately, were adopted. The platform advanced by Botts was rejected and a proposal that Botts address the convention was defeated.³⁵ Botts and his coworkers did not fare any better the second day when the convention assembled with fewer members. To defeat Botts, Doctor Thomas Bayne, an eloquent and fiery Negro orator, moved an immediate adjournment since the work of the convention had been completed. Hunnicutt requested that Botts and Governor

³⁴ *Whig*, August 2, 1867.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, August 2 and 3, 1867.

Peirpont be heard before the convention, but the motion to adjourn prevailed. The convention was then declared a mass meeting which, upon the motion of Bayne, Botts addressed. He advised the Negroes to surround themselves with every protection, and to accept the cooperation of any respectable white man who was willing to join the Republican party, endorse, and defend its principles.³⁶ The Botts viewpoint was strongly endorsed by Fields Cook, Cornelius Harris, and John Oliver and other substantial Negroes aligned with the cooperationists.³⁷

Referring to the defeat of "cooperation," the *Enquirer* said: "The dissolution of the cooperationists was remorseless and complete beyond any previous example in politics. In the first place they were *crowded out* of their attempted association. At the word from their leader, 'Hunnicutt's set' packed and jammed the African Church in a twinkling, with a couple of thousands as an overflow. When at the appointed hour, Mr. Botts, with a few of the new recruits, made their way to the building, they found it impossible to get even to the door! In the next place the cooperative gentlemen were *spoken out*. They were denounced from the stands as objects of suspicion, against whom all good Radicals should be on their guard. Thirdly, they were *voted out*. Not one of them was recognized as of the convention; although it was but 'a mass meeting,' one of them (Mr. Stearns) was rejected as a committee man; and the convention which adjourned on Thursday night to the next morning, to give them a chance to ask for admission, and *to watch them*, adjourned *sine die* as soon as it reassembled, declaring its business done; thus proclaiming at once their indifference to them as allies, and their contempt of them as foes!"³⁸ The press, however, failed to present the situation as it was. The fact of the case is that all of these political leaders had been frustrated and outgeneraled by Dr. Thomas Bayne, a Negro, one of the shrewdest politicians of his time.

³⁶ *Whig*, August 3, 1867.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1867.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, August 3, 1867.

After this fiasco of "cooperation" the movement steadily declined. Hunnicutt continued the dominant figure in the Republican party of Virginia. The "cooperation" of the less reactionary whites was rejected. The less liberal Republicans had to choose between the reactionary and the advanced positions. Many such Republicans including John Minor Botts accepted the viewpoint of the liberal reconstructionists. On the other hand, a Negro group led by Solon Johnson continued to function with the reactionaries.³⁹ Meanwhile the Negroes gained assurance that they would eventually have the desires of their hearts, and the white press exaggerated the seriousness of affairs by fomenting race hate to organize a white man's party.^{39a}

After this convention, moreover, the campaign went forward in a vigorous fashion. Liberals and reactionaries urged their partisans to register. The Congressional Act of July 19, 1867, finally fixed the status of electors and officeholders. All those who had held any civil or military office under the Federal Government, and any specified office under the State, and had subsequently supported the Confederacy were disqualified from voting or holding office. The test-oath, moreover, was to be required of officeholders. These restrictions, according to General Schofield, even denied to the State the service of able Union men such as Judge Rives who might have rendered invaluable assistance in the work of reconstruction.⁴⁰ Nevertheless the total number of registrants was 225,933. These included 120,101 white and 105,832 other persons. The white majority was 14,269. The whites were in a majority in 52 counties, the Negroes in 50. But the Negro majorities were in the more populous southern and eastern counties. In these counties there were 125,895 registrants, while in the counties with white majorities there were 90,555. On the basis of apportionment, one delegate to 2,061 constituents, the Negroes had an advantage.

In the nominations for the convention, the liberals

³⁹ *Ibid.*, August 29, Oct. 22, 1867.

^{39a} *Enquirer*, Oct. 2, 1867.

⁴⁰ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 396-397.

selected a fair proportion of Negro candidates.⁴¹ The election took place on October 18, 19, 20, 1867. The whites polled 76,084 votes; the Negroes, 93,145. The call of a convention was authorized by a vote of 107,342 to 61,887. Among those favoring the convention were 14,835 whites; opposing it, 638 Negroes. There were 39,073 whites and 8,345 Negroes who did not vote.⁴² [The reactionaries elected 33 delegates to the convention; the liberals 72, including 25 Negroes.

As a result of the election the situation became tense. The Negroes were naturally confident, but their conduct remained exemplary. In November, however, James W. Hunnicutt, the advanced liberal leader, was arrested charged with inciting the Negroes to insurrection in a speech made during the campaign. He was released on bail through the military authorities pending the adjournment of the Constitutional Convention.⁴³ The purpose of the conservatives then was to attack the reconstructionists at every vulnerable point while strengthening their own lines. This was manifest in the action of a group of Richmond Negroes led by Robert Hobson, who commenced the organization of "Conservative Colored Men's Clubs." In their first meeting, they adopted a resolution rebuking the white and black politicians who sought to alienate the Negro population of Richmond from the white, and asserting the purpose to harmonize the conflicting interests of the white and black people. Hobson asserted that he favored a system of common schools open to all, but he believed the men whose taxes supported the government should exercise the controlling voice in legislation. Among the other Negroes connected with this movement were John Cooley, John H. Smith, Isaac Hatcher, J. J. Scott, Charles Hunter, David Davis, David Frazier and Lemuel Hobson.⁴⁴

Speaking for the native whites, the reactionary press advocated retaliation against the Negroes.^{44a} The *Enquirer*

⁴¹ *Enquirer*, Oct. 15, 1867.

⁴² *Ibid.*, November 1, 1867, official returns.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, November 29, 1867. See also the *Enquirer*, Oct. 16, 21, 1867.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, November 22, 1867.

^{44a} *Ibid.*, Aug. 4, 1866; Oct. 23, Nov. 2, 6, 1867.

boldly led the way, recommending the proscription of Negro labor. In an editorial that journal said: "The course of the negroes of this State in the late election—arrayed as they were in a solid phalanx against the interest, nay the property and even the lives of the people, presents the most irrefragable proof that their hostility to us is instinctive and ineradicable. Nothing, therefore, remains for us to do but to meet the issue they have thus thrust upon us and defend ourselves like men." The "defence" recommended was the discharge of Negro workmen who had supported the liberal cause, and the hiring of reactionary Negroes and white employers.⁴⁵

Some few Negroes lost courage when they faced this situation. Many of them were thereby threatened with starvation. Lewis Lindsay was reported as saying in reference to this "that before any of his children should suffer for food, the streets of Richmond should run knee-deep in blood; and he thanked God that the Negroes had learned to use guns, pistols, and ramrods."⁴⁶ Commenting on this, the editor of the *Enquirer* deplored that "the capitalist was threatened with murder if he dared to discharge men who had declared themselves his implacable enemies. He is to house, feed and cherish the black vipers who meet in midnight conclave, and not content with heaping foul epithets upon him, conspire to defraud him of his property. Undaunted by the presence of the military, the negroes openly avow sentiments, which deserve death upon the gallows."⁴⁷

Proscription of Negro labor received the all but unanimous endorsement of the press. The *Lynchburg News* said: "We are gratified to learn that one hundred and fifty negroes employed at the Wythe Iron Mines, all of whom voted the straight out radical ticket, were discharged on Tuesday by the owner of the works." The *Bedford Sentinel* said: "They (the Negroes) have demonstrated their complete alienation from the whites, and have no right to look to them for

⁴⁵ *Enquirer*, Oct. 25, 26, 1867.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 12, 1867.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Nov. 12, 1867.

employment or shelter." The Petersburg *Index* asserted: "The negroes are the last men who should complain if their white employers were to discharge them and supply their places with white men." The Lynchburg *Virginian* said: "They (the native whites) should concert measures without delay to fill the State with white laborers from the North and from Europe. *They must crowd the negro out.* They must rid the State of an element that will hinder its prosperity, an element that, under the influence of base white demagogues, —themselves without property,—would tax the property of others to relieve themselves of obligation to educate their children and care for their paupers." ⁴⁸

The press contended that the election turned on the issue of race. The Richmond *Whig* said: "The election returns show with painful distinctness that the negroes have drawn a deep red blood line between themselves and the whites, and that with them principles are nothing, color everything." The Lynchburg *Virginian* said: "The irrepressible conflict which Mr. Seward first proclaimed between liberty and slavery, has now sprung up between the white and black men of the South, and may culminate in a war of races." Asserting the real sentiment of the whites, it added significantly that Virginians could not share political power with the Negroes. The Farmville *Journal* said: "There is a lesson taught by the result of this election which every white man can readily understand. It defines the line broadly and distinctly between the races which the colored people have themselves drawn. It is not our purpose to utter one word of censure of the colored people for taking the stand they have. They are free; but so too are the whites, presumed to be, and until the fact is proved otherwise, they should act the part of the free men." ⁴⁹

But the agitation of the press continued. Writing on November 1, 1867, the *Enquirer* said: "While the pirates are gloating over the prize which they have won by fraud and the disfranchisement of our ablest men, we tell them in the

⁴⁸ *Enquirer*, October 26, 1867.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1867.

name of the white men, not only of Virginia, but of the North, that the negro shall not rule in this fair State designed by God to be the dominion of the highest type of the white race. We unfurl the standard of resistance to the wretched creatures who are soon to meet to complete the work of Africanizing Virginia, and tell them that there are no chains which they can forge in the shape of a mongrel organic law which can bind the giant limbs of the Old Dominion."

Shortly the *Enquirer* commenced urging that there be held a reactionary convention. Expressing the unanimous endorsement of the native white press, the *Fredericksburg Herald* said: "It seems to be generally conceded, as a measure of policy, to hold a white man's convention in Richmond, at an early day. The 11th of December has been suggested."⁵⁰ On November 7, the Executive Committee of the Conservative party of Richmond issued a call for a State Convention to assemble at Richmond on November 11, 1867.⁵¹

The convention assembled according to the call. The delegates included many of the most active secessionists. Among those present were Alexander H. H. Stuart, John B. Baldwin, R. M. T. Hunter and John Letcher. Stuart, who was elected chairman, stated the case of his party saying that although the State had complied with the stipulated requirement for reconstruction by repealing the ordinance of secession, repudiating the Confederate debt, and emancipating the slaves, Virginia had not been restored to its rights in the Union. On the contrary, he contended there had been inaugurated a policy placing the Southern States under the control of an inferior race. "We have met to appeal to the North not to permit the infliction of this disgrace upon us," said he. "Our rights may be wrested from us, but we will never submit to the rule of an alien and inferior race. We prefer the rule of the bayonet." He then urged the organization of a party to bring the State under "a white man's government."⁵² The convention adopted resolutions as-

⁵⁰ *Enquirer*, November 9, 1867.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, 1867.

⁵² *Ibid.*, *Whig, Dispatch*, December 12, 1867.

suring the public of the actual abolition of slavery in Virginia and of the disinclination to reestablish the institution. They asserted, moreover, that the white people were not only lacking in hostility to the Negro, but favored their mental and economic development. They contended, too, that Virginia should be restored to the Union by virtue of the rights guaranteed each State in the Federal Constitution, and that it was abhorrent to civilization to subject white people to the supremacy of Negroes just emerging from slavery. Upon these principles as platform a "reincarnated" conservative party went forth to battle for the supremacy of the white race.⁵³

⁵³ *Ibid.*, December 13, 1867.

CHAPTER XIII

GIVING VIRGINIA A DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION

On December 3, 1867, the authorized Constitutional Convention of 105 members met in Richmond.¹ Of these, about thirty-five were reactionaries; sixty-five, liberals; and five, of doubtful convictions.² The liberal delegates were largely native whites from other States, and Negroes. There were 25 Negroes in all.³ Some of the non-native whites such as Judge John C. Underwood and James W. Hunnicutt entered the State prior to the war. The majority of the fourteen native whites, it was reported, were Confederate sympathizers during the war.⁴ The liberal majority organized the convention and elected Judge Underwood president.⁵

The native press called this body the "Mongrel Convention," the "Convention of Kangaroos" and the "Black Crook."⁶ The powers in control were referred to as "Vandals

¹ *Journal of the Convention*, 3.

² *Richmond Dispatch*, April 20, 1868.

³ The following is the list of Negro members:

Albermarle—J. T. S. Taylor.	James City and York—D. M. Norton.
Buckingham—Frank Moss.	Mecklenburg—John Watson.
Campbell—S. F. Kelso.	Middlesex and Essex—William Breedlove.
Charlotte—Edward Nelson.	Norfolk City—Thomas Bayne.
Charlotte and Halifax—J. R. Holmes.	Norfolk County and Portsmouth—George Teamoh.
Chesterfield and Powhatan—J. B. Carter.	Orange—F. W. Poor.
Cumberland—John Robinson.	Petersburg—Peter G. Morgan.
Fluvanna—James D. Barrett.	Prince Edward and Appomattox—J. W. D. Bland.
Goochland—William S. Mosely.	Princess Anne—Willis A. Hodges.
Greenville and Sussex—P. R. Jones.	Richmond City—Lewis Lindsay and Joseph Cox.
Halifax—David Canada.	Southampton—John Brown.
Hanover and Henrico—Burwell Toler.	
Isle of Wight and Surry—W. H. Andrews.	

See *Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention*, 1867-1868, 5-6; and *Enquirer*, Oct. 29, 1867.

⁴ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1868.

⁵ *Journal*, 4.

⁶ *Enquirer*, July 31, Dec. 5, 1867; Jan. 21, 1868.

in possession of the capitol.”⁷ Edgar Allen of Prince Edward was contemptuously called “Yankee Allen.”⁸ Frank Moss, of Buckingham county, was known as “Francis-Forty-Acres of Land-and-a-Mule-Moss.” Charles H. Porter who assisted Moss was characterized as “Homestead-Exemption Porter.”⁹ In reporting the proceedings, moreover, the white members of the convention were referred to with the title “Mr.” in polite style, but in the case of persons of color the designation was such as “Peter Jones, negro” and “Andrews, mulatto.”¹⁰ The *Enquirer* falsely stated on March 4, moreover, that the members of this body were “illiterate vagabonds, many of whom could scarcely write their names.”¹¹

In addition to Judge Underwood and J. W. Hunnicutt, the body included, as members, such prominent white liberals as James H. Clements, Judge Edward K. Snead, Edgar Allan, John Hawxhurst, Henry M. Bowden, Charles H. Porter, James H. Platt, and Orrin E. Hine. The reactionaries, deprived of the services of their veteran spokesmen, were represented by men who could not well state the case of the aristocracy. Among these were Eustace Gibson, John L. Marye, James M. French, J. C. Gibson, Jacob W. Liggett, W. H. Robertson, and Norval Wilson. The Negroes taking a conspicuous part in the proceedings were Thomas Bayne, Lewis Lindsay, Willis A. Hodges, J. W. D. Bland, and Daniel M. Norton. In the course of the session an increasing number of Negroes engaged in debate. They showed that they understood the issues involved, but they exercised little control in shaping the measures enacted. The Negroes were effective mainly as voters.¹²

After spending some time in organization and political discussions, the body commenced effective work in January.

⁷ *Enquirer*, Dec. 3, 1867.

⁸ *Ibid.*, July 20, 1868.

⁹ *Ibid.*, June 24, 1868.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1868.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, March 4, 1868. Negroes elected to the legislature were declared by the editor of the *Dispatch* “men without capacity, without character, and without honor.”—*Dispatch*, Nov. 10, 1873.

¹² See *Debates and Proceedings*, 228–750; *Richmond Enquirer*, February 1, to April 18, 1868; *Journal of the Convention*.

One of the first questions considered greatly interested the Negroes. This was the report of the committee on the preamble and bill of rights. The first section of the bill of rights stated "that all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divert their posterity, namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."¹³ But this was the language of earlier constitutions. Fearing lest the word "men" might be interpreted to exclude Negroes in the future as in the past J. W. D. Bland offered a resolution to delete the word "men" as reported, and insert in lieu thereof, the words "mankind, irrespective of race or color."¹⁴ This proposal, however, was not acceptable to the whites or the blacks. The latter strongly opposed incorporating into the Constitution specific references to race. Referring to this, Thomas Bayne expressed himself as desirous of keeping his pledge to the people of his section that he would endeavor to aid in making a constitution that would not have the word black or the word white anywhere in it.¹⁵ Other substitutes and amendments were offered to no purpose, for the section was adopted as reported by the committee.¹⁶

After devoting considerable time to the much needed taxation reform, the body took up a measure of far greater importance to the Negroes. This was the report authorizing the establishment of a system of free public education. The report on education provided for the direction and management of the system, and required the General Assembly to provide by law, "at its first session under this constitution, a uniform system of free schools; and for its gradual, equal and full introduction into all counties of the State, by the year 1874, or as much earlier as may be practicable." The report made detailed provision for the support

¹³ *Debates and Proceedings*, 241.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 221-253, 501.

of the system and delegated to the General Assembly full power to make all needful laws and regulations to carry into effect the provisions of this article.¹⁷

The report of the committee on education evoked a prolonged debate. It had not recognized racial distinctions. Immediately reactionary members attempted to amend the report so as to require white and Negro children to be taught separately.¹⁸ Such an amendment, proposed by James M. French, was lost, and another proposed by Eustace Gibson was laid on the table by a vote of 41 to 15.¹⁹ Most of the blacks, however, were determined to have mixed schools. Thomas Bayne then introduced a resolution that "the free public schools in this State shall be open to all classes, and no child, pupil or scholar, shall be ejected from said schools on account of race, color or any invidious distinction; and the General Assembly shall not have power to make any law that will admit of any invidious distinction in any public schools in this State."²⁰ Shortly thereafter, Charles H. Porter proposed as a substitute that "the free public schools of the State shall be open and free to all persons and classes, and no one shall be excluded for any cause which does not apply equally to all persons and classes without distinction."²¹

These resolutions produced a lively debate in which the Negroes freely participated. They anticipated the immense advantage to be gained from mixed schools, as well as the neglect from which they would suffer where the schools would be separate. Thus, according to the *Enquirer*, Lewis Lindsay warned the white reconstructionists that their political fate depended upon the disposition of Bayne's resolution, and that if mixed schools were defeated, the large majority of the Negroes would oppose the ratification of the Constitution.²² Peter Jones contended that the failure of the liberals to support this measure would constitute their

¹⁷ *Documents of the Constitutional Convention, 1867-1868, Mo., 28, 153.*

¹⁸ *Journal, 299, 301; Enquirer, March 28, 1868.*

¹⁹ *Enquirer, March 28, 1868; Journal, 299, 301.*

²⁰ *Enquirer, April 8, 1868; Journal of the Convention, 333.*

²¹ *Enquirer, April 9, 1868.*

²² *Ibid., April 8, 1868.*

repudiation of their own platform. Willis Hodges believed that the defeat of the mixed schools proposal would mean the break-up of the Republican party in Virginia. Yet, one Negro delegate, S. F. Kelso, counselled his fellow members to be content with separate schools. He believed the reactionaries could be trusted in the matter of educating the Negroes.²³ In the end, the proposal of mixed schools was defeated and Porter's resolution was lost by a vote of 21 to 67. The white liberals joined the reactionaries in frustrating this plan for democratic education.²⁴

The education report as adopted made no specific reference to either mixed or separate schools. However, several changes were made. One provided free text books for the poor. Another extended the time of the statewide introduction of common schools to 1876, if necessary. Still another authorized the General Assembly to prohibit parents or guardians from allowing their children to grow up in ignorance and vagrancy. Slight changes were made in the determination of the permanent and perpetual library fund; and the section providing for the support of the system was made to read: "The General Assembly shall apply the annual interest on the literary fund, the capitation tax provided by this Constitution for public free school purposes, and an annual tax upon the property of the State of not less than one mill, nor more than five mills, on the dollar, for the equal benefit of all the people of the State, the number of children between the ages of five and twenty-one years in each public free school district, being the basis of such division."²⁵ It was further provided that any unexpended sum of any one year in any public free school district should go into the general school fund for redistribution the next year, and that any county or school districts might raise on property therein, for the support of the schools, an additional tax not exceeding five mills on the dollar.²⁶

The question of paramount importance to all classes in

²³ *Enquirer*, April 8, 1868.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, April 9, 1868; *Journal*, 339, 340.

²⁵ *Constitution of Virginia, 1867-1868*, Article VIII, Section 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Article VIII, Section 8.

the convention was that of suffrage. It was the subject of debate for a large portion of the session. On the 9th of January, the question of suffrage arose in connection with a consideration of the seventh section of the bill of rights. This section said: "That all elections ought to be free, and that all men, having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to the community, have the right of suffrage, and cannot be taxed or deprived of their property for public uses without their own consent, or that of their representatives so elected, nor bound by any law to which they have not, in like manner, assented for the public good."²⁷ Immediately John Hawxhurst moved to amend the section so that it should read: "That all elections ought to be free and that all men should have the right of suffrage."²⁸ The purpose of this amendment was to assert that suffrage is a natural right, a proposition attacked by both liberals and reactionaries.²⁹

On the 16th of January, the question of suffrage again came before the body. With a long speech John C. Underwood brought forward the proposal to give "the franchise and the right to hold office to every citizen of the State of full age, of sound mind and of good reputation."³⁰ By this measure he hoped to elevate the status of three classes: the clergy who had not the right to hold office and women and Negroes who could not vote. He presented testimony to show the hostility of Madison, Jefferson, Henry and other renowned Virginians to slavery and inequality, and denounced some of the Virginians present for opposition to human rights and reconstruction. He expressed the hope that the convention would place Virginia 'on the platform of the more advanced and enlightened States of the Union by the entire enfranchisement especially of the clergy and the Negroes.' He was eloquently answered by Marye, who, in characteristic fashion, tried to show that government is the prerogative of white men.³¹

²⁷ *Debates and Proceedings*, 343.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 343.

²⁹ *Journal of the Convention*, 102; *Debates and Proceedings*, 347.

³⁰ *Debates and Proceedings*, 458.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 452, 454, 467, 541, 543.

Neither were the Negroes agreed on the question of the inherent right of suffrage. Thomas Bayne considered the right of suffrage inherent, God-given, commencing with the existence of man. But he asserted that a man could so abuse this right as to justify its being taken from him.³² Bayne thereby sought to strengthen the claim of the Negroes to the right of suffrage, and to make it impossible to deprive them of that right. On the contrary, Willis A. Hodges considered suffrage a political privilege conferred. Expressing his views further, Hodges said: "I am somewhat acquainted with political rights as well as natural rights. I never thought political and natural rights came from the same source. I expressed my opinion that I should be under the necessity of voting against the amendment. . . . I have no fear that colored men will be defrauded out of their rights if this article is not inserted in the Bill of Rights."³³ The Hawxhurst amendment, however, was rejected by a vote of 8 to 47. Six Negroes supported the measure and fourteen opposed it.³⁴

Suffrage continued the chief question before the convention after the submission thereto of the report of the committee on suffrage. This report recommended the enfranchisement of "every male citizen of the United States, twenty-one years old, who shall have been a resident of this State six months, and of the county, city or town, in which he shall offer to vote, one month next preceding any election," except "idiots and lunatics"; "persons convicted of bribery in any election, embezzlement of public funds, treason or felony"; "any person who shall challenge another, or accept a challenge to fight a duel, or act as second to any persons about to engage in a duel"; and "all persons who, by the proposed Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, known as Article Fourteen, or by the Reconstruction Acts, are prohibited from holding office, or from registering to vote for delegates to the Convention to frame a constitution, provided that the General Assembly may, by a two-thirds vote of

³² *Debates and Proceedings*, 522-526.

³³ *Ibid.*, 546.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 550.

both houses, remove the disability imposed by this clause.”³⁵ The report also recommended that all elections should be by ballot, that persons entitled to vote should be deprived of voting at any election because of non-payment of any tax imposed by law. Officers should be required to subscribe to an oath affirming their support and maintenance of the Constitution and laws of the United States, and of Virginia, and proclaiming their recognition and acceptance of the civil and political equality of all men.³⁶ Dissenting from this position, a minority of the committee submitted a separate report, largely a protest against the provisions in the report of the majority of the committee and an appeal for suffrage restricted by taxpaying and property requirements.³⁷ The minority report, of course, was rejected by 29 votes to 59.³⁸

Seriously taking up the majority report by sections, the first was amended so as to extend the residence requirement of electors in the State to twelve months, and in the subdivisions to three months.³⁹ Upon motion of S. F. Maddox the third clause of the section was amended so as to deny to any citizen of the State who after adoption of the Constitution should fight a duel with a deadly weapon, knowingly convey a challenge, or assist in the fighting of a duel, within or without the State, the right to vote or to hold office in the State.⁴⁰ But the sweeping measures of disfranchisement began with the fourth clause of the first section. J. C. Gibson offered to disfranchise all persons having less than three fourths Caucasian blood. The proposal was rejected.⁴¹ A violent debate ensued when Orrin E. Hine offered as a substitute to disfranchise in similar fashion all secessionists who after holding high offices under the United States had aided the rebellion. The substitute, however, was adopted

³⁵ *Documents of the Const. Convention, 1867-1868. Report of the Committee on the Elective Franchise and Qualifications for Office*, No. 39, 155-156.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 39, 155-156.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 37, 193-201.

³⁸ *Journal of the Convention*, 213.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 214, 215.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

in spite of Snead's effort to eliminate from it some of its most objectionable features.⁴²

Hine was equally successful in securing the adoption of an additional clause to disfranchise "every person who acted as a commissioned officer, above the rank of first lieutenant in the army or master in the navy, in any military or naval organization opposed to the United States during the late rebellion."⁴³ Because of going much further than Congressional Reconstruction had contemplated, this motion was reconsidered. The press reported that S. F. Kelso, a Negro delegate, referred to an order from Washington that the convention reconsider the question of disfranchisement.⁴⁴ It was known, too, that General Schofield was opposed to such sweeping action.⁴⁵ Later, amendments to the suffrage clause were passed. One provided "that the Legislature may, by a vote of three-fifths of both Houses, remove disabilities incurred by this clause from any person included therein, by a separate vote, recorded in each case."⁴⁶ The section was adopted as amended.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Hine, Hunnicutt, and Hawxhurst made other unsuccessful efforts for additional disfranchisement.⁴⁸

Condemning this action of the convention with respect to suffrage, the *Enquirer* of March 9th said: "The great danger which we apprehended was from negro suffrage with a proscription of the whites so limited and mild that our people might learn to endure the political equality of the negro. But in extending the right of suffrage to negro paupers and rogues, and in depriving of citizenship many thousands of our best citizens, whose proscription was not dreamed of by Congress, the intention of the Radicals to place the negro over the white man is as clear as noon-day. Equality of races is not contemplated in Virginia. Enough

⁴² *Journal*, 220, 221; *Enquirer*, March 9, 1868.

⁴³ *Journal*, 221-222.

⁴⁴ *Enquirer*, March 7, 1868.

⁴⁵ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 400.

⁴⁶ *Journal*, 239.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 240, 241, 243.

white men must be disfranchised to secure the supremacy of those who were but yesterday our slaves."

The consideration of suffrage continued. The fourth section requiring the General Assembly to enact a general registration law was amended to require a person applying to register to make an oath that he was not disqualified from voting by the Constitution then being framed, and that he would support it to the best of his ability.⁴⁹ On the motion of Hunnicutt, the fifth section of the report making the non-payment of taxes no bar to voting was stricken out.⁵⁰ Later, the seventh section was added to the suffrage article. This required all state, city, and county officers to take the test oath declaring that they had not voluntarily borne arms against the United States, given aid or counsel to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto, or exercised the functions of any office under any authority hostile to the United States, or yielded voluntary support to any pretended power within the United States, inimical thereto. The subscriber was required to defend the Constitution of the United States and to bear faith and allegiance to the same. The obligation he must take without any mental reservation or evasion of purpose.⁵¹ Other efforts toward disfranchisement were made but were blocked by a motion that the matter be indefinitely postponed.^{52, 53}

During the last hours of the convention, however, suffrage the all important question came up again. Some of the reconstructionists, even the Negroes, favored removing some of the restrictions imposed.⁵⁴ J. W. D. Bland, the Negro delegate from Prince Edward, for example, wished to offer the resolution that "all persons who advocate the adoption of this Constitution, or vote for a candidate for office favoring the same, shall be relieved from all disabilities imposed by the above section (number seven), so far as it relates to county,

⁴⁹ *Journal*, 240.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 283, 284.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 295, 296.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 379, 380.

city or town officers.”⁵⁵ Yet all such efforts failed because the body refused to suspend the rule that proposed resolutions might be offered. The Constitution was finally adopted by a vote of 51 to 36. Among the delegates voting for its rejection was W. H. Andrews, a Negro.⁵⁶

Defeated in this convention, the reactionaries prepared for the battle before the electorate or in the field. Expressing this sentiment, the Richmond *Enquirer*, an influential exponent of such opinion, urged “eternal resistance to negro rule.” On January 21, 1868, that journal said: “It is the duty of Virginia at once to take the ground that no order, ordinance, act, law or deed done by the representatives of the secret negro leagues, whether in or out of Convention, shall be obeyed, respected or heeded unless, under the compulsion of the fixed bayonets of the Federal soldiery.”⁵⁷

In a manner somewhat similar, the reactionary members of the convention expressed their disapproval of reconstruction. Addressing the people of Virginia these gentlemen said: “For nearly five months we have patiently sat in this Convention listening to the encomiums upon the negro race, to wholesale denunciations against the whites of the South, to propositions and speeches levelled against property, and addressed to the cupidity of enfranchised slaves suddenly invested with the controlling power in the State.” “It was the subject of remark among us during the progress of the Convention,” said they, “that the negroes grew more and more impracticable. The reported debates of the Convention will show how active they gradually became in the proceedings of the body.” “Another matter which attracted our attention,” said they further, “was the disrespect which the Northern leaders in the body paid to all that had heretofore been distinctive in the fundamental law of the State.” . . . “In a wanton and reckless spirit,” (they) “overthrew whatever had been consecrated under all previous constitutions in the affections of the people, or whatever such men as Madison, and Marshall, and Leigh, had deemed of prime

⁵⁵ *Journal*, 382.

⁵⁶ *Journal of the Convention*, 389.

⁵⁷ *Enquirer*, Jan. 21, 1868.

importance in laying the foundation of our social organization." ⁵⁸

Referring here particularly to the Negro, these native whites had in mind the bold efforts made by such leaders as Dr. Thomas Bayne. This gentleman especially angered the aristocratic element by the fearless and forceful manner in which he advocated the cause of the Negro. In the Convention he was quick on his feet, and he generally spoke to the point. An orator by nature, too, he was more than a match for his opponents. Unable to answer logically this eloquent orator and shrewd politician, his enemies undertook to hold him up to ridicule. At the close of the Convention the *Enquirer* of April 16, 1868, referred thus to him saying: "Our people will learn with profound regret that the distinguished statesman, sage, philosopher, logician, debater, elocutionist and tooth-puller, Dr. Thomas Bayne of Norfolk, will leave Richmond tomorrow per James River steamer. For four months and a half past the Doctor has afforded us no little amusement and not unfrequently furnished us with material for a paragraph. We bid the Doctor an affectionate farewell; wish him a safe and prosperous voyage, and trust that he will never more be conventionist for Virginia."

The Constitution, however, offered much ground for the rejection of some features. The most serious defects related to the "iron clad test oath" required of jurors and officers, and other restrictions on suffrage much harsher than Congress desired. These were sponsored by white reconstructionists in order to promote their political fortunes. Some of the reconstructionists strongly opposed these proscriptive features. Edgar Allan urged the Negro delegates not to vote for them because the adoption of such a constitution would secure to them only for a few years the power to reward men ambitious to receive their gifts. On the contrary, the Negroes would leave as a legacy to their children the hatred of white men surrounding them. Allan asserted that the men leading the Negroes endeavored to frame for Virginia

⁵⁸ Address of the Conservative Members of the Late State Convention to the People of Virginia, *Enquirer*, April 20, 1868.

a constitution designed to make her a rendezvous for adventurous foreigners.⁵⁹ Judge Snead held that the "test oath" would exclude from office nearly every native-born Virginian. Many Republicans, he said, could not take the oath, while others who could, would not do so. Practically all who remained within the Confederate lines during the war committed acts inconsistent with strict loyalty to the United States.⁶⁰

Article seven was a plan for county organization. The first section provided for the election or appointment of the designated county officers. The second provided that each county should be divided into so many compactly located townships as required, not less than three. It created a number of township officers to be elected by popular vote. The third section authorized the division of each township into compactly located school districts, with the provision that no district should be formed containing less than one hundred inhabitants. It further provided for the election of district school trustees by popular vote. The fourth section directed the division of each township into one or more road districts. An overseer of roads was provided for each of such districts. Section five required the General Assembly to carry the provisions of the article into effect, and empowered it to provide additional city or county officers, if necessary. Section six prevented the sheriffs from holding other offices, and relieved the county of responsibility for the acts of sheriffs.

This plan of county organization was considered decidedly objectionable. It was asserted that the plan would work well only in densely populated States; and that the number of county officers would be at least doubled in the smallest counties. It was estimated that small counties would have not less than sixty, and large ones perhaps two hundred such officials. Since all except county judges and county superintendents of schools would be elected by popular vote, it was felt that the general enfranchisement of the freedmen

⁵⁹ *Whig*, April 21, 1868.

⁶⁰ *Enquirer*, April 17, 1868.

would insure the election of Negroes or white liberals in the counties east of the Blue Ridge. Critics believed that the plan would be expensive, tending to increase taxes.⁶¹ The idea in complicating this system thus was to break up the family rings which were accustomed to control the counties. It was said that a single family got control of the government of Fluvanna county and held it for about fifty years.⁶²

Article ten dealt with taxation and finance. Taxation was made uniform and equal on different kinds of property, the same to be taxed according to its legally assessed valuation. No tax was to be imposed for the privilege of catching oysters, but the amount of sales of oysters caught by citizens in any one year was to be taxed. Incomes exceeding six hundred dollars a year were to be taxed, and licenses were required in certain vocations. A poll tax of one dollar was imposed upon all males of twenty-one years. But the proceeds of this tax were to be used exclusively in support of the public school system. Counties and corporations were empowered to lay a poll tax not exceeding fifty cents for all purposes. The native whites opposed this article because of the limitation and disposition of the poll tax. They felt that the collection of the poll tax would not be enforced, since no penalty attached to the non-payment thereof. They urged that the taxing powers should be lodged with the whites paying practically all the taxes.⁶³ The idea that the consumer is the real taxpayer had never reached the minds of the conservatives.

Article eleven provided for a homestead exemption. Section one granted to every householder or head of a family an exemption from levy, seizure, sale, execution, etc., issued on a demand for any debt, heretofore or hereafter contracted, on real and personal property to the value not exceeding \$2,000, under certain limitations. Section three provided that this article would not deter the sale of property

⁶¹ From *Address of the Conservative Members of the Constitutional Convention to the People of Virginia, Enquirer*, April 20, 1868.

⁶² Woodson, *The Disruption of Virginia*, an unpublished thesis at Harvard University.

⁶³ See *Conservative Address, Enquirer*, April 20, 1868.

having thereon any mortgage, deed of trust, pledge or other security. Section four prohibited the General Assembly from passing any law staying the collection of debts, commonly known as stay laws. The homestead law was attacked because of its retroactive feature. For this cause, it was alleged to be unconstitutional. If so declared, because of the prohibition of "stay laws," it was urged that debtors not caring to go into bankruptcy would have no relief.⁶⁴

The Constitution guaranteed equal civil and political rights, and public privileges to all. The native whites strongly opposed this provision because this legally secured to Negroes equal and free access to all hotels, railroad cars and other public places. It was feared that the provision might be used to enforce mixed schools, should the legislature not specifically require separate schools for the races. Furthermore, the native whites strongly opposed the requirement to vote by ballot. But this objection just as several others indicated the thorough reactionary character of the Virginians.⁶⁵ Voting by ballot has since then been adopted throughout the United States.

Article eight of the Constitution authorized the establishment of a system of free public schools. This was designed to elevate the 70,000 illiterate whites referred to by Superintendent W. H. Ruffner in the school report of 1871, as well as the Negroes whom slavery had generally deprived of mental instruction. Yet the reactionaries opposed the measure because, they argued, it was too expensive to be borne by the impoverished State. Many contended that the support of a system of free schools would defeat the payment of the public debt. Later, this same class gave all but unanimous testimony as to the beneficial effects of popular education. The measure authorizing public free education has been regarded even by the reactionaries as the crowning act of Reconstruction.

The Constitution framed by the convention was not voted upon immediately. An ordinance of that body required the

⁶⁴ *Enquirer*, April 20, 1868.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, April 20 1868.

instrument to be submitted to the people for ratification on June 2, 1868. But several causes brought about a postponement. In the first place, General Schofield, the military commander of Virginia, was hostile to the Constitution. The money to hold the election might be obtained from either of two sources. Congress might make a special appropriation for the purpose, but did not. The money might be taken from the State treasury with the consent of the military commander; but he declined to give that consent, and refused to order an election for ratification or rejection. Instead he recommended to Congress "that the people be authorized to vote separately on the disqualifying clause, a privilege which the convention had denied."⁶⁶ Next, the hostility of the native whites tended to bring about an extended postponement of the election. Finally, Congress itself, it was said, opposed the extreme proscriptive features of the Constitution. As a result, the Constitution came to a vote only after a bitter political contest extending over a year.

⁶⁶ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 402.

CHAPTER XIV

RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH COMPROMISE

Although General Schofield issued an order prohibiting the immediate election of State officers and the submission of the Constitution to the electorate,¹ the political parties forthwith prepared for a contest. The Republicans assembled in a nominating convention at Richmond on May 6, 1868. The balloting for nominees began on the first day. The leading candidates for the gubernatorial nomination were H. H. Wells, John Hawxhurst, and James W. Hunnicutt. Wells, having the advantage of appointment to succeed Peirpont, was nominated, securing 153 of the 218 votes cast. James H. Clements was nominated for Lieutenant-Governor, and G. W. Booker for Attorney-General. A. M. Crane received the nomination for congressman-at-large. George Teamoh, a Negro, was chosen as one of the four delegates-at-large to the National Republican Convention, and a State Executive Committee was appointed.² Hawxhurst and Hunnicutt who dominated the Negroes failed because they were such bitter enemies of the aristocratic party that they might alienate whites then disposed to support the Republican party. Wells was committed to the policy of Congressional Reconstruction. Speaking before the convention he advocated the civil and political equality of all men, and endorsed universal free education.

On the second day, the convention unanimously passed significant resolutions. The first resolution demanded an early and full restoration of Virginia to the Union on the condition prescribed by the Reconstruction Acts. The second resolution recognized the equality of all men, and declared that all citizens of the United States ought to have in each State the equal protection of the laws, and ought to enjoy the rights, privileges and immunities that States grant its

¹ Schofield, *Forty-Six Years*, 402.

² *Enquirer*. May 7, 8, 1868.

citizens, without regard to race, color, previous condition, or religious faith. The third endorsed the Constitution lately framed in the convention. The fourth pledged the party support to the establishment of a system of public free education maintained by general taxation. The fifth committed the party to secure the removal of disabilities for participation in the rebellion from those who should cooperate in the restoration of the State in accordance with the Reconstruction Acts. The sixth declared that the United States ought to reimburse those loyal citizens who lost property through the agency of the government in suppressing the rebellion. The seventh thanked Congress for its action in behalf of human liberty. The eighth endorsed U. S. Grant and Henry Wilson as the standard bearers of the national Republican party in the ensuing national election.³

On the 7th of May, the conservative or reactionary party of Virginia assembled in convention at Richmond. Colonel S. McDowell Moore was appointed temporary chairman. Speaking before the body, Moore "opposed the ratification of the 'abominable' constitution framed by the radically controlled convention, especially since it would assess an enormous taxation on the property of Virginia to build public schools." Moore was convinced of the wisdom of nominating State officers, but he knew that the appearance of new men and new speakers might have a good effect all over the State. Col. Moore advised a conciliatory course toward the Negroes believing that through "proper management the influence of the Federal Bureau agents over them might be nullified to the end that Negroes might be induced to vote with the Conservative party."⁴

Following the remarks of Col. Moore, the committee on permanent organization reported John B. Baldwin the choice for president. Later the business committee reported three resolutions. The first resolution proposed that candidates be nominated for State offices and Congress in the approaching election. The second provided that candidates be selected

³ *Enquirer*, May 8, 1868.

⁴ *Ibid.*, May 8, 1868.

without reference to their ability to take the disqualifying oaths. The third authorized the nomination of delegates to represent the party in the National Democratic Convention shortly to be held in New York. The first and third resolutions were adopted without a contest, but the effort to change the second resolution eliminating any reference to the ability of candidates to take the disfranchising oaths was unsuccessful.⁵

Then the body proceeded to nominate officers. Many names including those of A. H. H. Stuart, John B. Baldwin, General James Walker and Robert E. Withers were put in nomination for Governor. In the course of the nominations R. T. Daniel expressing the position of the party said the object was not to nominate men who could be elected, but rather those capable of defeating the Constitution. "If a Democratic President should be elected at the next Presidential election," asserted Daniel, "the issue will be raised at once whether the Reconstruction laws are constitutional or not. They will be, *must* be decided unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States."

The balloting for Governor resulted in the nomination of Robert E. Withers, a Confederate colonel. General James A. Walker was nominated for office of Lieutenant-Governor, and John L. Marye, Jr., for Attorney-General. Marmaduke Johnson received the nomination for Congressman-at-large, and nominations were made of delegates to the National Democratic Convention. In accepting the nomination, Withers pledged himself to make every effort to relieve the State "manacled and bleeding of the incubus of negro suffrage and negro domination." The convention endorsed the address of the Conservative members of the Constitutional Convention condemning the Constitution, and recommended the address to the people of Virginia.⁶

The campaign began immediately. On June 4, 1868, R. E. Withers, the reactionary candidate for Governor, made a characteristic speech at Petersburg. Addressing his audience,

⁵ *Enquirer*, May 8, 1868.

⁶ *Ibid.*, May 9, 1868.

Withers said: "I appear before you as the standard bearer of the white man's party, and I demand of them their support. I do not ask the support of the negroes, nor do I expect it, for I consider them unfit to exercise the right of suffrage. I do not wish those present to understand that I am an enemy of their race, for I am not, but, on the contrary, will hold myself ever ready to protect their welfare, as much as any blatant 'carpet-bagger' there is in the country; but I will never consent to extend to them the political right of suffrage. I cannot or will not forget their conduct during the war, when we had to leave our wives and children in their protection, but with all this I cannot grant them the right of suffrage, but will do all in my power to promote their future welfare." Withers then appealed for the defeat of the Constitution on the ground of race, since Negroes and "carpet-baggers" had the principal share in framing it.⁷

Despite the pronouncement of Withers, some few Negroes advocated his election. On June 26, John Breckinridge strongly urged the Negroes of Nelson county to support the reactionary party. According to the correspondent, Breckinridge expressed "in homely language, very sensible ideas."⁸ In a similar manner Lindsey Tyree addressed the people of Green Bay. He spoke out forcibly before whites and Negroes in the interest of the reactionaries. Tyree asserted that the reactionaries were the best friends of the Negroes, and that the liberals desired to exploit them for selfish ends.⁹ The masses of Negroes, however, supported the Republican candidates. Thus the campaign was vigorously prosecuted by both parties until the elections of 1868 convinced Virginians of the futility of their opposition to universal Negro suffrage as a condition of the readmission of the State to the Union.

In the meantime, the Republicans had taken measures to bring their work before Congress for endorsement. Through Governor Wells in June they requested the Reconstruction

⁷ *Enquirer*, June 5, 1868.

⁸ *Ibid.*, July 6, 1868.

⁹ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1868.

Committee to provide a liberal appropriation for immediate election in Virginia. In response thereto, the House of Representatives passed a bill authorizing that the election be held from the thirteenth to the fifteenth of August, 1868. But the bill was unsatisfactory in that it reopened registration and thus gave the opportunity for the qualification of sufficient white voters, perhaps, to defeat the Constitution.¹⁰ Matters were then prolonged with plans and schemes as to registration and new petitions to Congress. The remaining portion of the year 1868 thus passed away without any definite achievement. On December 8, 1868, the House of Representatives did pass a bill providing that the election be held in May, 1869,¹¹ but the Senate did not concur therein.¹²

Prior to this time, moreover, no opposition to the passage of the measure had come from Virginia. According to A. H. H. Stuart, "apathy seemed to pervade the State and everybody remained quiescent." But Stuart awakened the reactionaries from their lethargy. This was accomplished by publishing in the *Dispatch* and in the *Whig* a communication written by Stuart over the signature of "Senex." The writer urged the recognition of universal suffrage in return for universal amnesty as a compromise. He pointed out that the revolutionary changes which Virginians had already made in giving sanction to the Constitutional amendment abolishing slavery and granting to Negroes the rights to testify in courts had not produced harmful results. He further proposed that an appropriate committee might select from the Constitution of 1850 and the proposed Constitution of 1861 the better provisions omitting the word white, and therefrom frame a complete constitution embodying the universal suffrage and universal amnesty proposition in its broadest terms, including Negro eligibility. This new Constitution, he

¹⁰ See Beck's speech, *Congressional Globe*, 1868, 4416.

¹¹ *Congressional Globe*, 1868-1869, 37.

¹² A. H. H. Stuart, *A Narrative of the Leading Incidents of the Organization of the First Popular Movement in Virginia in 1865 to Reestablish Peaceful Relations between the Northern and Southern States, and of the Subsequent Efforts of the Committee of Nine in 1869 to Secure the Restoration of Virginia to the Union*, 18.

would request Congress to consider in lieu of the one submitted by the convention.¹³

But such was the hostility of Virginians to Negro suffrage that few were ready to accept the proposal. The editor of the Richmond *Enquirer* refused to publish the communication; and the editor of the *Whig* agreed to publish the paper upon the conditions that Stuart should be referred to as the author, that the editor should not be held committed to support the propositions therein contained, and that the *Dispatch* should agree to publish it simultaneously under the same conditions. In this arrangement the *Dispatch* concurred. The reactionary press, moreover, severely condemned the proposition. It argued that the reactionaries had a numerical preponderance in Virginia sufficient to defeat Negro suffrage; that Negro suffrage implied ruin, and for that reason should be resisted as long as escape therefrom was possible.¹⁵

Nevertheless sober minds regarded the proposition worthy of some consideration. On the day of the publication, Stuart, John B. Baldwin, General John Echols, T. J. Michie, Judge H. W. Sheffey, N. K. Trout, Maj. H. M. Bell, R. H. Catlet and others entered into a thorough discussion of the proposal. As a result they decided to call a conference of certain prominent men in the State in Richmond on December 31, 1868, for the purpose of deciding upon measures to defeat the proposed Constitution. The meeting convened as scheduled and lasted two days. On the second day several important resolutions were adopted. One reaffirmed the conviction that the freedmen were "unsafe depositaries of political power," but stated the belief that the majority of Virginians were prepared to surrender their opposition to the incorporation of Negro suffrage "into their fundamental law as an offering on the altar of peace, and in the hope that union and harmony may be restored on the basis of universal suffrage and universal amnesty."¹⁶ Another resolution authorized the appointment of a committee of nine persons who should go to

¹³ A. H. H. Stuart, *A Narrative, etc., op. cit.*, 20-23; see also *Dispatch* and *Whig*, December 25, 1868.

¹⁴ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc., op. cit.*, 25.

¹⁵ *Whig*, Jan. 2, 1867.

¹⁶ *Whig*, Jan. 4, 1869; Stuart, *A Narrative, etc., op. cit.*, 28.

Washington and make known to Congress the views and purposes declared in the convention, and obtain from Congress the most favorable action on the Constitution. It was reported, moreover, that General Stoneman, the successor of General Schofield in command of Virginia, expressed a sympathetic approval of the objects of the meeting.¹⁷

The committee consisted of A. H. H. Stuart, John L. Marye, Jr., W. T. Sutherlin, James T. Johnston, Wyndham Robertson, John B. Baldwin, William L. Owen, James Neeson and J. F. Slaughter. On January 8, 1869, the committee assembled in Washington. The committee then perfected a plan of action to assure the success of its mission. This included interviews with President-elect Grant and with prominent members of Congress prior to the formal conference with the Reconstruction Committee of the House. To combat the committee of conservatives, two Republican Committees had been sent to Washington. One of these included William Forbes, Franklin K. Stearns, L. H. Chandler, Edgar Allan and others. The other was an official committee headed by Governor H. H. Wells and was composed of whites and blacks.¹⁸

All three committees were permitted to appear at the same time at the conference with the Reconstruction Committee of the House of Representatives. The committee of nine urged the expurgation of disfranchising clauses and the county-organization article. Wells expressed the opinion that loyal men would be unsafe from outrages if all the white people were enfranchised. He believed if the native whites controlled the State they would shortly take away the rights of the Negro unless the Republican party became strong enough to protect the latter. He declared that the movement sponsored by the reactionaries did not have the support of the white Virginians and could be carried only by Republican voters who would not support it. He urged that the Constitution be adopted as it was, if Congress desired Reconstruction to work out in accordance with its own policy.¹⁹

¹⁷ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, 28, 29; *Whig*, Jan. 4, 1869.

¹⁸ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, *op. cit.*, 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36, 37.

These remarks were controverted in part by Baldwin and Franklin Stearns, the latter the leader of the moderate Republicans. Stearns asserted that the people of Virginia were ready to comply with the Reconstruction laws, and that more than half of the property holders were ready to restore the State on the basis proposed by the committee of nine. Stearns urged that the Constitution as framed would be defeated by an *honest vote* of the people, but that such an event would leave the State without a civil government. Hence he supported the plan of the reactionaries since it offered prospects of a stable government.²⁰

Later the visiting committee appeared before the Judiciary Committee of the Senate. John B. Baldwin was the spokesman of the committee of nine. Shortly thereafter, upon the request of the Senate committee, the committee of nine submitted a written statement of their grievances, together with a detailed draft of the amendments they desired incorporated into the Constitution. This statement urged the modification of the disfranchising clauses, the county-organization article, the provision relating to homestead and other exemptions, the section relating to church property, and the clause providing the maximum of taxation for local free school purposes.²¹ The committee then had conferences with General Grant. It is reported that he favored the expurgation of the disfranchising clauses and of the county-organization provision.²²

In the meantime the committee encountered some opposition in Virginia. The reactionary press led by the *Enquirer* was especially hostile. The *Enquirer* thought that the "demands" of the committee were not sufficiently sweeping. That journal desired several modifications of equal civil and political rights and public privileges to Negroes; it urged a provision denying Negroes the right to hold office and serve on juries; and it advocated a specific provision prohibiting mixed schools, and a mixed unit of the militia. It desired

²⁰ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, 37, 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 39-44.

²² *Ibid.*, 44-46.

the distribution and apportionment of delegates so changed as to insure a white majority in the legislature, and a readjustment of taxation so as to relieve the whites of some of the burden of taxation.²³ The journal would prefer military rule to Negro suffrage with the right of the Negro to hold office.²⁴

The committee of nine remained in Washington some time to press its claims and doubtless made a favorable impression without accomplishing anything definite.²⁵ It found some hope, however, in the opposition to the leadership of Wells developed in the Republican party.²⁶ Wells had probably incurred the enmity of Hunnicutt. Wells was also opposed by the moderate Republicans, who considered him a dangerous radical.²⁷ Because of personal reasons, an estrangement had developed between Wells on the one hand and Edgar Allan and W. H. Samuel on the other. Besides, Wells had won the enmity of General William Mahone, the president of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, it was reported, before they conflicted over the railroad policy of the State.²⁸ For this combination of causes, then, the Republican State Executive Committee met in January, 1868, set aside the nomination of Wells, and ordered another nominating convention.²⁹

On March 9, 1869, the Republican convention assembled at Petersburg. The body consisted of practically an equal number of white and Negro delegates. The factions were divided on James H. Clements and H. H. Wells for the gubernatorial nomination. Every step in the organization of the convention was bitterly contested. The session became so stormy that the police had to interfere. Wells, however, got control of the convention the second day and had himself nominated by acclamation.³⁰ For the Lieutenant-Governor

²³ *Enquirer*, January 18, 1869.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, January 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 1869; *Whig*, Jan. 13, 1869.

²⁵ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, *op. cit.*, 47-48.

²⁶ *Whig*, January 30, 1869.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, January 21, 1869.

²⁸ *Enquirer*, March 11, 1869.

²⁹ *Whig*, January 30, 1869.

³⁰ *Richmond Whig*, March 10, 1869.

the Wells forces proposed the name of Dr. W. W. Douglass of Richmond county. Lewis Lindsay presented the name of Dr. J. D. Harris, a Negro. Opponents of Wells endorsed Harris to weaken the ticket, and he was subsequently nominated for the office.³¹ Thomas R. Bowden was nominated for Attorney-General; and A. M. Crane for Congressman-at-large.³²

Then the convention adopted a platform demanding the early restoration of Virginia under the Constitution, unamended; endorsed the election of General Grant and his inaugural pronouncement relating to universal suffrage; expressed the hope that no State might be permitted to deny to a citizen the right to vote, or to be voted for; asserted the equality of rights of all citizens and reaffirmed the essential features of the Constitution; declared the right of the national party in power to determine the manner as well as the Constitution and laws under which the State should be restored; and attacked the policy of permanent disabilities but opposed universal amnesty.³³

After the convention had adjourned, a faction of the party expressed the desire to act in the interest of the Republican party, the integrity and permanence of which had been threatened by the result of the Petersburg convention.³⁴ Somewhat later, these leaders supported by more than one hundred and fifty responsible persons published an address, naming a conservative Republican ticket in opposition to Wells. The nominees were: Gilbert C. Walker for Governor; John F. Lewis for Lieutenant-Governor, and James C. Taylor for Attorney-General.³⁵

The campaign was about to renew, although the date of the election had not been set. However, President Grant quickly acted in the matter. On April 7, 1869, he recom-

³¹ Regarding this a weakness of the Wells' ticket, the *Enquirer* began immediately to attack Harris as a Negro, a native of Jamaica, reported to be married to a white wife.—*Enquirer*, March 15, 1869; see also *Dispatch*, Aug. 26, 1870.

³² *Ibid.*, March 11, 1869.

³³ *Whig*, March 11, 1869.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, March 12, 1869.

³⁵ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, *op. cit.*, 53.

mended in his first message to Congress that an election be held in Virginia, and that certain parts of the Constitution, as might be deemed expedient, might be submitted separately to the electorate. On April 10, Congress complied with this request. On May 14, therefore, President Grant ordered such an election to be held on July 6, 1869, requiring a separate vote on the clauses relating to the test oath and disfranchisement.

Although the reactionaries had not won a complete victory, the recognition accorded them by Congress and President Grant heartened them for the approaching election. They were further aided by a successful movement resulting in the withdrawal of the conservative candidates in favor of Walker who had the better chance to defeat the Wells ticket. At first, there was much difficulty in bringing the conservative voters to the position of supporting the Underwood Constitution, even with the test oath and disfranchising clauses eliminated, but they finally yielded and supported Walker throughout the State.³⁶ The practical effect of this action was to leave but two State tickets in the field, and to reduce the campaign to a contest between the advocates of the Constitution unchanged and its opponents. The action of the convention was endorsed by a large part of the press. The *Staunton Spectator* said: "The Convention did, in our opinion, the wisest thing it could have done *in the circumstances* by which it was surrounded." The *Charlottesville Chronicle* said: "The fact that all classes of Conservatives can now act together for the good of the State, is a matter for congratulation." The *Lynchburg Intelligencer* said: "The Walker ticket can be elected with ease by a large majority, if the people will do their duty, there can be no doubt." The *Fredericksburg Virginia Herald*, which had opposed fusion, acquiesced in the decision of the convention. It counselled: "Let us then close ranks, join hands again, and rising to the importance and dignity of the occasion, quit ourselves like intelligent men."³⁷ The *Whig* originally favored fusion,

³⁶ Stuart, *A Narrative, etc.*, 52.

³⁷ *Whig*, May 5, 1869.

but the *Enquirer* did not support the movement immediately.

The campaign in spite of itself was a battle over the Negro. The candidates toured the State. Gilbert C. Walker made a characteristic speech at Lynchburg. He pledged himself, if elected, to be the governor of the whole State, and to deal impartially in behalf of all of the people. He asserted that the Negro's right to vote had been established by law, but said nothing of guaranteeing to the Negroes the exercise of the right to sit on juries. He endorsed universal amnesty and impartial suffrage. Whether or not persuaded by his speeches a number of Negroes declared in favor of Walker. Colored men formed clubs in different localities in support of Walker. Such reports came from Richmond and from points in Henrico, Norfolk, Nelson, and Mecklenburg counties.³⁸ Fields Cook, moreover, strongly opposed the proscriptive clauses of the Constitution and expressed himself in favor of equal rights for all. Cook was an independent candidate for Congress, but he favored the conservative rather than liberal Republican candidates in the State. The *Whig* urged the white people of the district to support Cook rather than Porter for Congress.³⁹

In the midst of the campaign, moreover, the Negroes projected themselves further into the foreground by holding a convention to assert their rights. On February 6, 1869, Congress had passed a joint resolution requiring the removal from office of all who could not take the test oath prescribed in the act approved on July 22, 1866. The military commander of the district was empowered to fill such vacancies. General Stoneman established a board of officers to investigate, recommend, and report to headquarters so that the commanding general might make suitable and competent appointments to the offices about to be vacated.⁴⁰ In March, General Stoneman reported that there were 5,446 offices in the State of which 2,613 were vacant. General Schofield had made 532 appointments, and Stoneman 1,972. Only 329

³⁸ *Whig*, May 3, 4, 12, 18; June 28; July 6, 1869.

³⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, January 26, 1869.

officers could take the test oath.⁴¹ Yet appointees were not drawn from the Negroes. It was this condition that the Negro met to protest.

Speakers before the convention expressed the attitude of the Negroes clearly. Addressing the body, J. W. D. Bland said the convention was called to consider whether those in authority in the State were treating the Negroes fairly. They proposed to ask General Canby, who had succeeded General Stoneman as the district military commander, to select at least one magistrate from among the Negroes, and to permit Negroes to sit as jurors where Negroes were on trial. In Charlotte, said Bland, a Negro known to be peaceable had been recently killed. It might happen that some who participated in the murder would sit in the case as jurors. This was not justice, nor was it just to exclude Negroes from offices and jury service. Bland urged the Negroes not to support reactionaries since they opposed the aspirations of the former and took delight in describing them as "apes and corn field niggers." Speaking in a similar vein, Dr. Daniel Norton denied that the Negroes sought social equality with the whites, but that the Negro demanded equality of rights and of opportunity. Similarly Dr. Thomas Bayne urged the Negroes to fight for principles. He advised them to guard their rights jealously and to adhere to the Republican platform of the 17th of April. He wanted the Constitution adopted without amendment. In that way the interests of the Negroes would best be secured.⁴²

Then the convention adopted resolutions expressive of the sense of the body. The first invited the cooperation of friends interested in the material development of Negroes. The second condemned the policy of making civil appointments excluding Negroes from office; opposed the fusion of Conservatives and Republicans as conducive to the overthrow of Republican principle; expressed hostility to the elevation to power of those opposed to principles of liberty, justice and equality before the law; and requested the commanding

⁴¹ Appleton's *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1869, 710.

⁴² *Whig*, May 28, 1869.

general to give the Negroes representation upon the bench, in the courts and in the executive offices of the State. Other resolutions requested guarantees against discrimination in jury service; endorsed the Constitution as framed in the convention; pledged support to the regular Republican nominees; advocated the intelligent and fearless exercise of the suffrage; endorsed the establishment of a system of free schools; expressed thanks to Northern people who had made possible the education of Negro children; recommended well-directed industry and wise legislation as the remedies to relieve the State of depressed conditions; endorsed the attitude of the national administration on the question of the rights of man; and rejoiced over the appointment of General Canby as military commander of the district.⁴³

In the meantime the campaign continued. Various expedients were resorted to win the Negro vote. It was represented that a division had occurred between thriftless and industrious Negroes. The latter felt a common interest with employers. Steps were taken to the end that those unwilling to support Walker would not vote against him.⁴⁴ The Negroes were told it was futile to vote the Wells ticket. White Republicans, it was stated, would refuse to vote for Dr. Harris, the Negro candidate for Lieutenant-Governor placed on the ticket to embarrass Wells.⁴⁵ It was said that Wells had abandoned the Negroes since he had declared opposition to the disfranchising and "test oath" clause, without recommending their rejection to his followers. In this and similar ways, efforts to influence the Negroes against Wells continued down to the day of the election on July 6, 1869.⁴⁶

The Walker ticket was elected. The whites cast 125,114 votes; the Negroes 97,205. Walker received for Governor 119,535 votes; Wells, 101,204. Lewis received for Lieutenant-Governor 120,068 votes; Harris 99,600. Taylor was given for Attorney-General 119,446 votes; Bowden 101,129.

⁴³ *Whig*, May 29, 1869.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, June 8, 1869.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, May 31, 1869.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, July 6, 1869.

The electorate rejected the disfranchising and "test oath" clauses, the former by a vote of 124,360 to 84,410; the latter by 124,715 to 83,408. The Constitution was ratified by a vote of 210,585 against 9,136. Nearly 50,000 registered electors did not vote. These included 24,637 white persons and 22,898 Negroes. The electorate sent to the General Assembly a vast majority of reactionary and conservative members. Among the 43 Senators elected, 13 were liberal Republicans, of whom 6 were Negroes. There were elected also 3 Conservative Negro delegates. The total number of Negroes in the General Assembly was 27.⁴⁷

Among the white people there was great rejoicing over the result. The *Petersburg Index* said: "Virginia has accepted restoration, has rebuked proscription, has vindicated her right to a voice in the control of her affairs, and by a vote unprecedentedly large, places at the head of the government the ticket of peace and equality." The *Danville Register* said: "Let us all now go to work, white and colored, looking forward hopefully to a just and liberal system of legislation and an impartial administration for the protection of all alike." The *Lynchburg Virginian* said: "The deluded negroes have been taught a lesson which will bring them to their senses, and we shall have no more trouble with them." The *Norfolk Journal* rejoiced that Virginia was "redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled."⁴⁸

Nevertheless the reactionaries were uneasy. General Canby announced his intention to enforce the test oath with respect to members of the legislature. Many of the reactionary candidates could not qualify, if elected. Through the agency of A. H. H. Stuart, however, President Grant required General Canby to withdraw the order. The matter was finally adjusted when the Attorney-General of the United States authorized members of the legislature to take necessary measures to restore the State without entering into any general legislation.⁴⁹

Among the Negroes, moreover, the turn of events had

⁴⁷ *Whig*, July 17 and 21, 1869.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1869.

⁴⁹ Appleton, *Annual Cyclopædia*, 1869, 713.

different effects. Some rejoiced over the reactionary victory which they helped to achieve. To these the Richmond *Whig* paid a tribute, calling them "our colored allies." This journal said: "We now thank them in the name of their white fellow citizens. They are brave and true men, who deserve our respect, confidence and affection." Remarking upon the opposition they encountered from Negroes who tried to intimidate them, the journal said: "Among the most prominent of the colored leaders was John Cooley, who inspired all of the faithful band he headed with his own high courage." Continuing, the *Whig* asserted that a marked impression was made on the Negro vote all through the State. It appeared from the returns from a number of counties, moreover, that many Negroes had voted the Conservative-Republican ticket, and a greater number did not vote at all.⁵⁰

On August 12, 1869, the Colored Conservative-Republican Club of Richmond issued a heartening address to the depressed Negroes. Affirming the guarantee of equality to all men, the address urged the Negroes not to continue "morose, ill-natured, suspicious and jealous because they had not elected a Republican governor." Asserting that whether the Negroes contended for men or principles, the result was essentially the same, the address said the victors were thorough Republicans, comparing favorably with the vanquished in all the essentials of philanthropy, statesmanship and patriotism. The address advocated industry, economy and sobriety of the Negroes, and urged them to acquire homesteads, educate their children, cultivate the spirit of brotherly love among all classes, and strive to deserve the confidence of their fellow men.⁵¹ On the other hand, Fields Cook appealed to the whites to refrain from revengeful action against the Negroes who supported liberal Republicans because they had been taught to consider the party their only security. He abhorred the driving of Negroes away from their homes because they voted in accordance with their convictions. This fate he intimates some Negroes who voted for Walker suffered. Cook urged

⁵⁰ *Whig*, July 8, 1869.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, August 12, 1869.

the whites to declare the intention to protect the rights of the Negroes, and then to carry out that promise.⁵²

But the point of view of the mass of Negroes was well expressed by *The Nation*. Commenting upon the election that journal said that while the Constitution contained the essence of Reconstruction, that is, accepted the results of the war and established universal suffrage, many persons were alarmed because of the elements that supported Walker. These comprised not merely the Conservative-Republicans but the reactionaries who either participated in the rebellion or sympathized with it, and who until that moment bitterly opposed the reconstruction policy of Congress. It was feared that a constitution which such men suddenly approved, contained something capable of use to defeat the intent of the framers. It was not believed that such men as R. M. T. Hunter, William Smith and John B. Baldwin could become sincere converts to the doctrine of equal rights, and it was doubted whether a candidate of their choice would become a zealous champion of such a policy.⁵³

The depression of the Negroes was shared by at least some of their white associates. Governor Wells resigned his office in September. Gilbert C. Walker became the provisional Governor on September 21, 1869.⁵⁴ Plans for the restoration went forward rapidly. The General Assembly convened on the 5th of October⁵⁵ and soon thereafter ratified the Fourteenth Amendment by a vote of 36 to 4 in the Senate, and of 126 to 6 in the House of Delegates. The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified by a vote of 40 to 2 in the Senate, and by a unanimous vote in the House.⁵⁶ The body elected to the United States Senate, John F. Lewis and James W. Johnston. The former, an unconditional Union man and Conservative-Republican, was elected for the long term.⁵⁷ This was done to indicate the faith of the party in

⁵² *Whig*, July 14, 1869.

⁵³ *The Nation*, IX, 44.

⁵⁴ *Whig*, Sept. 21, 1869.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, October 6, 1869.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1869.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1869.

control, and to secure the services of Lewis in facilitating the restoration of the State.

Nevertheless the liberal Republicans had not accepted their defeat as the final elimination of the party from control of Virginia politics. They called a convention to reorganize the party so as to command the approbation of Virginians and the country and to facilitate the restoration of the State to the Union. The convention assembled on November 24, 1869. The committee on the address and resolutions reported on the second day. There were two reports. The majority represented to Congress "that the election held in this State, on the 6th of July last, resulted in a Confederate triumph, which they unhesitatingly asserted was achieved by artifice, intimidation and fraud." They said: "Threats of violence prevented the exercise of free discussion during the campaign; in some instances our meetings were broken up by mobs, the leaders of which have as yet gone unpunished. The colored people dependent upon their labor for support were threatened with loss of labor; and a war of extermination, even, was not unfrequently held out before them in case they voted for the separate clauses and the Republican ticket." The report further set forth that the reason of the defeat was submission of the separate clauses to the electorate. It defended the proposal that disfranchisement and disability should stand; and adding that Congress had acted upon misrepresentations, requested that body to reconsider its action so as to require the test oath of officers elected, or a new election on the Constitution as a whole.⁵⁸

A minority report also came before the body. This report declared "that although a constitution thoroughly Republican in form was ratified by a large majority of the qualified voters of Virginia at the election held July 6, 1869, the unwilling support given to that instrument by many who voted for it, and the fact that the General Assembly elected simultaneously is controlled by a majority who have constantly denounced its liberal provisions justifies the apprehensions of Republicans that it will not be carried out in full

⁵⁸ *Whig*, November 26, 1869.

faith, unless Congress, in its wisdom, can exact guarantees that every citizen of Virginia shall enjoy every privilege to which he is entitled by the Constitution of the United States and by the Constitution of Virginia." The report pointed out that the Judiciary then recently elected by the General Assembly consisted of men who did not recognize the newly granted rights of Negroes as inalienable, and it was feared that their conformance to the letter of the new Constitution would be in the spirit of the old, thus prolonging irritation and strife. The report finally requested Congress to readmit the State in strict accordance with the requirement of the Reconstruction Acts.⁵⁹

The motion to substitute the minority for the majority report was rejected by a vote of 108 to 29. Among the Negroes favoring the substitute were Peter G. Morgan, J. W. D. Bland and Willis A. Hodges. Finally the majority report was adopted by a vote of 121 to 23. Many Negroes including Daniel Norton, Lewis Lindsay, John Oliver, R. D. Beckley, S. F. Kelso and Thomas Bayne favored this report.⁶⁰

But this action of the Republicans did not influence the national administration. On December 6, 1869, President Grant recommended to Congress the prompt readmission of Virginia to the Union.⁶¹ A bill passed by Congress providing for the admission of representatives from Virginia was signed by the President on January 26, 1870.⁶² On the next day Gilbert C. Walker qualified as Governor of Virginia on the basis of the late election. Then he issued a proclamation of the restoration of Virginia to the Union and authorized the legislature to convene on February 8, 1870.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Whig*, November 26, 1869.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, November 26, 1869.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 1869.

⁶² *Ibid.*, January 27, 1870.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, January 28, 1870.

CHAPTER XV

DEMOCRACY CRUSHED BY CASTE

The extremely aggressive party, endeavoring to reconstruct the State by eliminating from the electorate a majority of the rebellious whites through the test oath and disfranchisement, was decisively defeated in the election of 1869. The party did not realize this fact, but it became more apparent in the course of time that Virginia would gradually come under the control of the reactionaries. It should not have required much foresight to see that the native whites, outnumbering the Negroes two to one, would soon devise some scheme to nullify their political activity. The reconstructionists, however, rendered the State an important service. They gave Virginia the only democratic instrument of government it has ever had. In spite of some of its cumbrous provisions and its imperfect machinery the Underwood Constitution was as far ahead of that of the old regime or that of the present Virginia caste system as a modern steamship is of an Indian canoe. Such an innovation, of course, struck the reactionaries as a disaster, destructive of all that the gods had ordained as equitable and just.

Grasping thus the situation upon the completion of this Constitution, the reactionaries realized how wisely they had to proceed to defeat this democracy. Little help could be expected from the ranks of the rabid ex-Confederates,¹ for they would proceed so radically as to invite the interference of the Federal Government. The *Dispatch*, unlike the *Enquirer*, preferred to organize a conservative party rather than irritate the opposition by going back to the Democratic machine.² The leadership of the prudently moderate and diplomatically political was gradually followed by the majority of the whites. Ostensibly they accepted the terms of reconstruction imposed by the Federal Government, which was of

¹ *Nation*, I, 109.

² *Dispatch*, Oct. 12, 1870.

the impression that the Virginia reconstructionists were exceeding the bounds of wisdom by insisting on a wholesale disfranchisement of the secessionists. Those in control of the Federal Government at that time, too, were not so much interested in Negro suffrage as they were later. It was believed that there was a chance for the friends of freedom to attract a considerable number of white men in the South.

In the first election under this constitution of Virginia in 1869, however, there appeared little ground for the hope of democracy. The liberal reconstructionists were defeated by a combination of moderates and conservatives led by Gilbert C. Walker for Governor. The democratic plan set forth in the new Constitution, therefore, was not actually carried out. The task of the working out of the government in accordance with these principles fell into the hands of men, some of whom did not believe in them.³ The only thing gained by the Negroes was the right to participate in the government. Negro officeholders and their co-workers were too far outnumbered to influence materially the policies of the government. Only twenty-seven Negroes sat in the first legislature, and others elected throughout the State served in minor offices.

The following description of the first legislature by an Englishman who traveled in the State in 1870 is interesting: "I counted among the delegates," said he, "three or four coloured men, one of whom was a pure negro, very well attired, and displaying not more jewellery than a gentleman might wear; while another, who seemed to have some white blood in his veins, was a quite masculine-looking person, both physically and mentally. The Senate was presided over by the Lieutenant-Governor of the State, who was altogether like a young member of the British House of Lords, as the Senate itself had a country-gentleman sort of air not perceptible in the Lower House, which more resembled a Town Council or Parochial Board than the House of Commons. There were two coloured Senators among the number, quite black, but senatorial enough, and like men who in Africa would probably

³ The personnel of the reconstructed State government took the position of the native whites.

have been chiefs. In the Lower House the coloured delegates mingled freely with the other members, but in the Senate these two sat in a corner by themselves. Yet they seemed to take a cordial interest in the proceedings, and manifested all sympathy with the Senators who addressed the House. As I have never been able to understand the official monotone of our own courts, I cannot profess to have been able to follow every word with all the differences of intonation here; but the procedure was quite intelligible, and I was pleased and amused to see how truly the form and pressure of the 'Mother of Parliaments,' after a century of separation, were reproduced in her Virginian child. The presence of coloured men in the British Parliament is impossible, simply because the negro element is not among us; but the Virginian feature I have ventured to notice is only a practical reflection of the great deliverance of Lord Mansfield—that slavery is incompatible with the law, air, and soil of England. As long as the political equality of the negro is not pushed to any greater extreme than it is like to be in Virginia, or made the factious instrument of bad and trading politicians, it can hardly be the cause of much trouble or discord in any part of the United States."⁴

The Negro as a participant in the government, however, was at a disadvantage and he did not fare much better when party lines were more clearly drawn during 1872 and 1873. In the new elections engaging the attention of the people there gradually developed among the reactionaries a movement for the separation of the races in politics. Although caution was urged upon leaders thus disposed, the majority of the native whites soon organized around a nucleus of conservatives who cooperated with the national Democratic party in contradistinction to their opponents who followed the fortunes of the Republicans. This, of course, required time, for at a convention of the conservatives in 1871 ex-Confederates endeavored to revive the old issues of the war at the very time that this body welcomed six Negro delegates

⁴ Somers, *The Southern States Since the War*, 17.

⁵ *Whig*, July 8, Aug. 12, 1869.

with applause.⁶ Negroes, however, never thereafter constituted an important factor in the Conservative party. Because of its anti-Negro propensities it became more and more unpopular for Negroes to vote with the party. They were driven into the Republican ranks. Thereafter, then, the Negroes, together with the office-holding, patronage-seeking class, tended to become the chief constituents of that party in Virginia.

The native whites had things in their control and manifested satisfaction with the new regime. The very first legislature which met under the new Constitution was highly praised for its good work by some of the organs of the State. Reconstruction was apparently working out nicely. On July 12, 1870, the *Daily Dispatch* said: "The Legislature has adjourned. It did a great deal of work. We have never known a more industrious legislative body. Indeed we feel like saying that we have never known one as industrious. Elected under extraordinary circumstances; surrounded by difficulties innumerable; compelled to put into operation a Constitution which is so awkwardly and ambiguously worded that no one can say with certainty what many of its provisions mean; and almost all without experience in legislation, the members have done credit to themselves. All of their acts have not pleased us, we confess; yet we cannot deny to them that praise to which they are justly entitled. We hope that they will return next fall with full purpose of mind to do still better."⁷

On April 1, 1871, the same editor expressed himself as follows: "The General Assembly of Virginia adjourned *sine die* yesterday, after a session of nearly four months.⁸ The session has been one of great interest as well as great industry. No Legislature has met in Virginia during the present century, the bulk of whose members had had so little experience in legislation as that whose session was concluded yesterday, and no legislature has assembled during the same time

⁶ *Whig*, Aug. 30, 31, 1871.

⁷ *Dispatch*, July 12, 1870.

⁸ In South Carolina it was considered a crime for the legislature to hold such a long session.

which had more important duties to perform than that now just adjourned. If to these facts we add that there was a new element in the body during the session just past, which occasioned embarrassment and perplexity, we may understand the difficulties in its way. The session may, with these points considered, be pronounced to have been remarkably successful and entitled to the just reward for services faithfully performed. A body more earnestly devoted to the work before it we never knew, and though in all its acts it may not have been without blame—we never knew a legislature that was—in the main its measures have been wise, while its devotion to the public interest has been clearly proved.”⁹

The year 1873, however, marked an epoch in the reconstruction history of Virginia. An important State election took place that year. Having things more to their liking, the Conservatives felt that they could more openly express themselves with respect to the issue of the day. For various reasons they had avoided the usual attacks on the Negro as a participant in the government; but now the Conservatives kept this before the people as the main question of the campaign.¹⁰ While still declaring their belief in justice to both races, in education, and in cooperation with the Federal Government, they denounced the rule of the reconstructionists in the South and warned Virginia against such consequences. The race question and racial antagonism were kept in the foreground to the extent that a majority of the ignorant native whites believed that they were in danger of being ruled by their former slaves. The native whites, therefore, turned to the Conservative candidates as the saviors of the State and elected them with James L. Kemper for Governor by a safe majority.¹¹

After this election it was clear to students of politics that the cause of the Republicans in Virginia for the present was doomed. The Conservatives regarded their victory as a

⁹ *Dispatch*, April 1, 1871.

¹⁰ *Enquirer*, July 18, 20; *Dispatch*, Aug. 8; *Whig*, Aug. 7, 1873.

¹¹ The native press actually called on all white men to vote against Negroes or declare themselves unworthy of recognition as members of a superior race.

finality and proceeded to use their influence as far as possible toward undoing such democracy as the Negroes and their co-workers had established. What the Conservatives had been doing by trickery and fraud they now hoped to work out legally.¹² They proposed an amendment to the Constitution, specifying conviction for certain misdemeanors and failure to pay poll tax as disqualifications for voting; and it was ratified in 1876. One-third of the local offices, increased by the constitutional convention to prevent the local governments from falling into the hands of a few reactionaries, were abolished. As these measures bore heavily on the Negroes upon whom the Republican party depended and at the same time strengthened the promoters of caste, that party was really undone in the triumph of the Conservatives in 1873.

Thereafter assured of the domination of native whites, the public ceased to direct as much attention as formerly to matters political. The State was passing through an economic crisis which affected the whole nation, and it was further hard pressed by problems arising from its own financial situation. During the Walker administration the flush of money from the war inflation ceased to reach the treasury and the surplus of the State was exhausted. The State found its credit in danger because of an enormous debt. The question of funding or of actually paying these obligations, then, became the all-absorbing topic of the hour. There were those who still denounced the Negroes and advocated further efforts for their reduction to serfdom, but financial and economic problems tended so to divide public opinion that there was not maintained a united front against the race. The State was undergoing economic reconstruction and had to decide upon some permanent financial policy. This problem could not be easily solved in the midst of railroad building and struggles for railroad consolidation. To pay this State debt a Funding Act was passed; but, being

¹² Rowell, *A Historical and Legal Digest of Contested Election Cases in the House of Representatives, Virginia*, 246, 250, 265, 318, 393, 394, 402, 410, 451, 452, 458, 496.

unsatisfactory to the rich whites, most interested in having the debt paid, they kept up their efforts to have it changed. Politics in the State thereafter, then, tended to center around paying the debt. The line of cleavage was that between the "Debt-payers" and the "Repudiators." As the funds disbursed in the payment of the debt did not come directly to the Negroes, and some of it was contracted before the Civil War, they tended to favor the non-payment of these obligations that the funds then being raised by the State might go for the support of public schools. School funds had been illegally diverted to the payment of other obligations and a part of the insufficient number of schools had to be closed.¹³

In this case, however, the Negroes were not unanimously attached to the repudiating party. A considerable number of Negroes of the State like Dr. W. H. Brooks and Bishop W. B. Derrick advocated the paying of this debt. The State, they said, is morally obligated to pay its creditors. Any action to the contrary would be dishonorable.¹⁴ Those Negroes who supported the other party, however, explained their position by contending that they were not in favor of repudiation but merely advocated that the debt be "scaled." In the beginning of this controversy, however, the Negroes were largely voters. Their share was mainly to support or reject the proposals presented to them. It was said that the Negroes were bought in putting through one of these debt-paying measures in 1872, just as numerous white members of the legislature were swayed backward and forward in this *mêlée* by the considerations and interests which their votes secured. One distinguished native white was charged with stealing a whole railroad.

The editor of the *Dispatch* together with the *Enquirer*, however, did not abandon the race issue. The former repeatedly emphasized that "no negro is fit to make laws for white people."¹⁵ What he meant by this is that, although

¹³ Almost any of the annual reports of Supt. W. H. Ruffner will support this statement.

¹⁴ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 92; statement of Dr. W. H. Brooks made to the author.

¹⁵ *Dispatch*, Oct. 18, 1873; May 23, 1874.

an intelligent Negro could be elected to legislature from a county in which the majority of the voters were Negroes, such a Negro should not be permitted even to represent in the legislature the minority of whites in that county. In other words, if there were 200,000 Negroes in a district and 100,000 whites, the law-makers should be elected altogether from the whites because of the intellectual superiority and the innate worth peculiar to the white race. Plainly put, this would mean that it matters not how high the Negro ascended or how low a white man descended, every Negro in Virginia must be kept beneath the lowest white man. Disguising these claims the best they could, the leading editors appealed even to the Negroes to assist them in undoing the work of the liberal reconstructionists to whom the freedmen were indebted for such political consideration as they had received.

Gradually, too, the Conservatives began to make inroads on the Negro vote. Exactly how many Negroes thus allied themselves with the native whites is difficult to determine, however, for the Republican party was so popular among the Negroes that any one of them voting another ticket was considered as a disgrace to his race and as an enemy to his country. A Negro holding a position in which his support came from members of his own race actually suffered martyrdom in cooperating with the Conservatives. The cases of the Rev. J. W. Dungee of Richmond, and the Rev. Gabriel Palmer¹⁶ of Buckingham County, may be offered in evidence. Both were compelled to give up their churches because of their politics. In the case of Dungee, moreover, he became practically stranded. Being unable to find anything to do among his own people, he had to beg his bread from the whites with whom he had voted.¹⁷

It was easier for those Negroes to support the native whites when they held positions in which they derived their support altogether from this element, such as bar-keepers, barbers, house servants, porters, cooks, and the like. The

¹⁶ Statement made by Dr. C. G. Woodson, a former resident of that county.

¹⁷ *Dispatch*, Feb. 20, June 22, and Nov. 15, 1877.

press contains numerous words of praise for such classes of Negroes from year to year.¹⁸ Only one of all of the Negroes who cooperated with the Conservatives, however, ever gained prominence in that State. That Negro was Giles B. Jackson. Among the others were Abram Hall, Addison Washington, Robert Perkins, Thomas Gladman, W. H. Bass, John Chissell, Walker Howard, W. H. Pinn, W. H. L. Combs, Joseph Lewis, H. H. Page and Henry Coleman.¹⁹

The large majority of Negroes, however, opposed this change of politics; and they did not content themselves with a mere protest. In various parts of the State they used force. Some of these cases are interesting. On June 25, 1868, the *Enquirer* reported that John C. Breckenridge, the Conservative colored speaker, while addressing citizens at Nelson Court House was all but murdered by Negroes. Whites came to his rescue and saved him.²⁰ On July 3, 1868, according to report, Nelson Rosser, a negro who had betrayed the Loyal League at Mt. Zion, Campbell county, was tied up by the heels and suspended from the limb of a tree for several hours. Upon deciding to come back to the Loyal League by taking the oath, which he did, they released him. The accused were arrested and "sent on for trial by the county court."²¹

On October 25, 1872, the *Dispatch* displayed what it designated as NEGRO PROSCRIPTIONISTS, taken from the *Marion Patriot*. This paper reported that "there were twenty-four indictments made by the grand jury of this county last Monday. Fourteen of them were the negroes who threatened to kill Fayette Washington, the Colored Greely speaker, from Wytheville."²²

On November 11, 1873, referring to the persecution of William Bass, a blacksmith, a Conservative Negro, the

¹⁸ *Enquirer*, April 24, Oct. 5, 29, Nov. 1, Dec. 16, 1867; July 4, Aug. 10, 1868; April 26, 1869; *Dispatch*, Oct. 18, 1870; Oct. 2, 1871; Oct. 11, 1872; Oct. 28, 1873; Jan. 18, May 22, 29, July 4, Sept. 30, 1876; March 16, 1877.

¹⁹ *Dispatch*, Sept. 8, 1876.

²⁰ *Enquirer*, June 25, 1868.

²¹ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1868.

²² *Dispatch*, Oct. 25, 1872.

Dispatch said: "They then threw rocks at his house, broke his windows, and otherwise damaged his property." ²³

On November 15, 1873, a correspondent from Westmoreland County wrote: "A few colored men voted the Conservative ticket. These, it seems, have excited the violent hostility of the colored Republicans. One old man, Job Brown, who voted with the whites, was seized while out oystering on Thursday after the election and quite severely beaten by three young negro men. The high-handed outrage has created a good deal of imagination. The guilty parties have been arrested and bailed to appear at next court." ²⁴

On September 14, 1874, the correspondent of the *Dispatch* from Petersburg reported: "As an instance of the manner in which negroes intimidate and prosecute those of their race who vote the Conservative ticket (in defiance of the terms of the enforcement act) it is stated that a venerable and respectable man named Phil Sewell is now undergoing trial in the Gilfield Baptist Church for having voted with the whites in the May elections." On September 21, 1874, the *Dispatch* carried the statement that the pastor Rev. Henry Williams explained that voting was not the charge but that he did so to deprive the Negroes of employment and to drive them away from the city. Coming into the church on the following Sunday, it was reported, the pastor said: "Sit in the rear. Charges against you." According to the correspondent, the audience cried: "Put him out." ²⁵

The progress of the Conservatives in making inroads on the Negro was plainly evident from year to year as the number of news items from time to time indicated. On August 1, 1870, the Richmond *Dispatch* said: "We had to-day one of the most quiet elections for town officers that any community has ever been blessed with. A 'white man's ticket' headed by our present Mayor, was brought out, and our colored fellow citizens were so well persuaded that opposition would be useless that they stayed from the polls—

²³ *Dispatch*, Nov. 11, 1873.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1873.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 21, 1874.

only few of them voting during the whole day. What a blessing if they could always take this view of the situation.”²⁶

On September 15, 1870, in the *Dispatch* a correspondent from Louisa Court House said: “The Negroes have a majority in this county, but we trust by indefatigable labor we shall be able to beat them and see happiness and good order restored to our people, prosperity to our country; all of which will be pleasant to remind us of the palmier days of Old Virginia history.”²⁷

On October 1, 1870, in the *Dispatch* in a letter from Fluvanna County it was said: “Politically we are in pretty fair condition, and the union effected last May between whites and blacks upon the broad principle of conservatism promises, in spite of the efforts of a few woolly-headed dissenters, still busy tugging at that bottom rail to get it on top, occasionally humming a line from the patriotic air, “Hung Jeff Davis on a Sour Apple Tree,” and in spite of a few white fanatics who with their broken-riveted jack-knives, are whittling away at the huge column of negro suffrage, proposing to erect in its stead a provision for the extension of slavery in the Territories. In spite of these efforts the ranks are firm, and promise to poll a telling vote this fall.”²⁸

The Conservatives began to believe, too, that their task was almost accomplished. Commenting on what it considered a glorious victory in the election of 1873 the *Dispatch* said: “Before the time shall come for another State election, the negroes, let us hope, will have divided themselves between two new parties, and we shall have before us the prospect of a campaign in which there will be no division on a line of color. We would deprive them of no right. We merely wish to keep them in their own place. The party which wished to put them over white men is now laid low in the dust forever so far as Virginia is concerned.”²⁹ Speaking with more

²⁶ *Dispatch*, Aug. 1, 1870.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1870.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1870.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1873.

assurance on November 6, 1874, the *Dispatch* said: "The elections of Tuesday showed the negro in a more independent light than he has been wont to appear. But he is still amazingly devoted to the fortunes of those who are the enemies of the whites, from whom he receives kindness, employment, home and his very subsistence."³⁰ Judging from the following from a letter of the Petersburg correspondent addressed to the *Dispatch* June 4, 1874, one can determine how earnestly this elimination of the Negro from politics was urged. He said in reporting the celebration of a political nature: "The mottoes on the transparencies last night very plainly indicated the popular desire that no more negroes or Radicals of any color, whatever their supposed efficiency, be retained in office under the restored conservative government."

On July 15, 1875, there appeared this tendency in a letter from Powhattan which said: "There is a large colored Republican majority in this county, but all the officers of any importance elected in May last, including a majority of the board of supervisors, the commonwealth attorney, sheriff, treasurer, and clerk are Conservatives, nominated and elected by these same colored Republicans; and there is perhaps a better state of feeling existing here between the whites and blacks than in any similar county in the State. This may be attributed to the fact that there is not a single carpet-bagger left."³¹

As a matter of fact the Republican lines had become very much broken. Negroes were voting for former slaveholders and slave traders, who, although they did not declare themselves Republicans, easily convinced the Negroes that they were better than the Republicans who endeavored only to get into office on their votes. It soon became almost impossible for the Republicans to carry even the communities in which they had a large majority of Negroes to count on.

Having won their point in practically subduing the Negro in politics, the Conservatives tended to lose interest as one would in prolongation of a battle already won. Observing

³⁰ *Dispatch*, Nov. 6, 1874.

³¹ *Ibid.*, July 15, 1875.

this situation in a political meeting there, E. King said: "The negroes are very numerous in the vicinage; but, constituting a party by themselves, did not flock about the Court-House, although two of the better class of them lingered near, as if appointed as reporters. The court-room in which the political meeting was held, after the session of the court had been adjourned over for a day in deference to the discussion of pending issues, was small and destitute of seats. The farmers and town residents dropped in at intervals during the lucid and fluent speech made by General Kemper, and listened for some little time with respectful attention, although they did not seem to take that thrilling interest in the irrepressible conflict which I had been led to expect.

"The speeches of the candidate (since elected Governor) and his friends were somewhat condemnatory of the Administration's course with regard to certain Southern States. It was evident that the hearers present, with the exception of the negroes, were all of one mind, and would vote the Conservative ticket without fail. But as soon as the farmers had seen the candidate of their party for Governor, and heard him make a few remarks, many of them strolled back upon the lawn, and began discussing the crops and comparing notes on horses. They regarded the election of the Conservative ticket in the State as a foregone conclusion, and were apparently tired of all political talk, preferring to attend to their home matters, and the bettering of their agricultural prospects, rather than to a revival of past memories. By noon many of them had completed their errands, and were riding out of town on their smart horses, as grimly and silently as they had entered." ³²

This loss of prestige of the reconstructionists was due in some measure to the inability of the Republicans to get along harmoniously.³³ There was usually factional strife between the Negro political leaders and the prominent white men in the party. The Negro spokesmen boldly asserted that the whites were in the party not because they were interested in

³² King, *The Great South*, 572-574.

³³ *Dispatch*, April 30, August 19, 1872.

human rights, not because they had any serious thought as to improving the condition of the Negroes. What they wanted, the Negroes maintained, was merely to hold the offices and exploit the Negro for their own personal benefit. In practically all of their nominating conventions, therefore, there usually ensued a fracas of such bitter nature that even after the matter had been apparently adjusted there were left wounds which were too serious to be healed before the time of the approaching election. Knowing more about political manipulation than the Negroes had had the chance to learn, the whites in the party generally unseated and counted out sufficient delegates to nominate their candidate, usually a white man. If they saw they were about to be defeated in a convention, they would sometimes withdraw from the legally constituted body and organize as a faction claiming legality through some technicality decided upon beforehand for such an emergency and worked out in a would-be legal style. When the claims of these two groups came before the central or State committee, the candidates nominated by the majority of the constituents of the District would be ordered to give way to those of the machine.³⁴

The Conservatives used this to great advantage. Repeatedly referring to the inconsistency of the position of the Negro in voting against the people who offered them employment, the native white press pointed out that the Republicans were not in love with the Negroes but were merely using them as a means to an end. An editorial which illustrates the method of emphasizing this fact appeared in the *Dispatch* on October 8, 1870. It said: "It is very curious to observe the dodgings of the Radicals, *i.e.*, the white Radicals. They do not and never did like the Negro, and nothing annoys them more than the pretensions to office set up here and there by the negro. He was only intended to vote, and it is both perverse and obstinate for him to be claiming office. It must not be thought of. Whenever he undertakes to be the competitor of a white Radical, he is denounced as a

³⁴ *Enquirer*, Aug. 2, Oct. 16, 1867; *Dispatch*, April 22, 23, 1872; Aug. 7, Sept. 29, 1876.

'disorganizer,' a getter-up of 'revolution.' But where a negro has the nomination, and a white Radical is by an outside caucus set up against him, that is a different matter. The white man is never the 'disorganizer.' When we consider how the white Radicals have cajoled the negro, how they claim to be his especial friends, and how they fight for his equality with the white man, this conduct is downright fraud and hypocrisy."³⁵

This happened in 1870 in the case of Dr. Norton, a Negro of Williamsburg, "a quick-moving, sharp and smart person." The white opponents, seeing that they were outnumbered, withdrew from the convention before he was nominated for Congress in the first district. They then nominated a white man. The Executive Committee recommended another convention. Dr. Bayne led a revolt the same way in another district, but he was denounced as a traitor to the party.³⁶ To placate the Negroes thus enraged because of such injustices white Republicans often permitted the nomination of a few of the race in each county for unimportant offices. These were usually constables, justices of the peace, supervisors of roads, overseers of the poor, and sometimes delegates to the General Assembly. A number of Negroes were elected to the House of Delegates and a few to the State Senate but these ranks gradually grew thin until in this sphere they finally became a nonentity.

Sometimes, as in the case of Petersburg, where the blacks were in the majority, the local recognition was considerable. Writing in 1874 Edward King said: "At Petersburg the negroes are from time to time largely represented in the Common Council, and sometimes have a controlling voice in municipal affairs. The white citizens have readily adapted themselves to circumstances, and the session of the Council which I attended was as orderly and, in the main, as well conducted as that of any Eastern city. There was, it is true, an informality in the speech of some of the colored members which was ludicrous, but it was evident that all were acting

³⁵ *Dispatch*, Oct. 8, 1870; April 22, 23, 1872.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1870.

intelligently, and had come to some appreciation of their responsibilities. Most of the colored members were full types of the African. In some matters they readily admit the superiority of the white man in legislation, and in Petersburg willingly gave the management of the city finances into the hands of the elder Conservative members of the Council. The Commissioner of Streets and the Engineer of the Board of Waterworks were both negroes. The mayoralty and the other city offices remained, at the epoch of my visit, in the hands of white Radicals, and the negroes had made no special struggle to secure them, although they are to the whites in the city as eleven to nine.”³⁷

It is interesting to note, however, that although the native whites were opposed to the participation of Negroes in politics and never abandoned the idea of eliminating them therefrom, they so detested the white Republicans that they often expressed an interest in or a preference for Negroes.

On announcing the appointment of John Oliver as a notary public, May 9, 1867, the *Enquirer* characterized him as “a conservative Radical opposed to the insane policy of confiscation,” and “far more intelligent, courteous and dignified than most of his white confreres in the late Radical Convention.”

This happened also in the case of Kelso, a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868, who went as a member of the committee to invite General Grant to address that body. It seems that when the committee arrived at the house at which General Grant was stopping, the white members left Kelso out in the hall while they approached the distinguished visitor in the parlor. The editor of the *Enquirer*, therefore, criticized the reception given the Negro saying: “He is one of the most respectable looking Negroes in the Convention, dresses well, and is certainly as well worth the respect as any negro that could have been appointed.”³⁸

On January 20, 1871, a correspondent from Prince Edward County reporting to the *Dispatch* said in praise of a Negro citizen: “Tal Branch, a colored man of character, and of more than

³⁷ King, *The Great South*, 580-581.

³⁸ *Enquirer*, January 22, 1868.

ordinary intelligence, addressed the people, advising them to vote for the tax required by law for the organization and maintenance of public schools." ³⁹

On January 20, 1872, a correspondent of the *Dispatch* from Petersburg referring to the fight of Henry Williams, Jr., for the nomination for Congress in that district said: "Between Stowell and Porter, both of whom have carpet-bagged into this district for the purpose of getting into Congress, and Rev. Williams, the preferences of the delegates are somewhat divided. Williams, who represents the colored element, will give his white brethren a hard fight, and if the white men of the district could decide between them, he would be selected as the most deserving man of the three." Referring again to the candidacy of Williams on June 17, 1872, this correspondent said: "Many of the colored people, we think, are disposed to go for Williams, but it is pretty evident that their Radical white masters hereabouts will not allow them to do so." ⁴⁰ Commenting on J. P. Evans in such a contest, September 19, 1873, the Petersburg correspondent said in the *Enquirer* of that date: "Evans is quite young, a pure black, and came here some years ago, I believe, a whitewasher by profession, but is very intelligent, very civil and has the good will of everybody so far as I know, as a preacher and well disposed man. He has been a member of the House of Delegates one session, and if elected to the Senate will no doubt represent the district as creditably as any other Radical."

The following from a correspondent from Nottoway Court-house, reporting on June 10, 1877, a meeting held to hear candidates for the nomination is another case in evidence. He said: "Mark R. De Mortie, a colored man from Burkeville, also a candidate for Congress, was the next to speak. I must say, Mr. Editor, that De Mortie certainly showed more gentlemanly qualities during the meeting than either Brady or Fernell (the other speakers), and though his face be black, I cannot believe that his heart is as black as Graham's or Stowall's, and I am sure that his

³⁹ *Dispatch*, January 20, 1871.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1872.

speech was much more sensible than the speeches of the representatives of either of the other two.”⁴¹

After the election of 1873, however, the Negroes were ineffective in politics for a decade. They were voting and holding minor offices; but in all of this, they were being used as a means to an end. The only hope for them to play a conspicuous part again lay in the possibility of division in the ranks of the Conservatives. This situation was not wanting. Earlier there had developed a difference of opinion among the Conservatives as to the proper solution of pressing economic problems. These did not at first prove to be sufficiently important to threaten their lines, and the Conservative party feasted on the fat of the land until 1879. That year the Readjuster party embracing most of the elements favoring some sort of escape from the immediate payment of the State debt had taken form. This gave the Negro another opportunity in politics. Both the Funders and Readjusters needed votes. The Negroes were therefore welcomed as voters although not permitted to shape the policy of either party. In a few cases, however, Negroes were nominated by the Readjusters for minor local offices. The Funders likewise appealed to the Negroes,⁴² hiring Negro speakers and appearing on the same platform with them. The Negroes, however, were more easily moved by the Readjusters who would free them from paying a debt most of which their former masters had contracted during slavery.

There were three tickets in the field and the result proved difficult of analysis. It was evident, however, that the Negroes had exercised the balance of power in electing the Readjuster ticket.⁴³ The native white press endeavored to make this clear in trying to convince the public that the aristocracy of Virginia opposed repudiation. “We claim no negroes as Democrats,” said the *Dispatch*. “We do not think there are a thousand such in the State of Virginia.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Dispatch*, June 10, 1877.

⁴² *Ibid.*, April 8, 1875.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 25, Nov. 7 and 10, 1879.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1879.

Referring to the Debt-Paying bill over which this contest was fought the editor of the *Dispatch* said on November 6, 1879: "Where the largest portion of the taxes are paid is where the Maculloch bill is strongest, and it would be a most unprecedented state of things if it should so happen that the impecunious negroes would not let the large property-holders pay a debt which these latter knew to be honest, and which they are anxious to pay. It is a poor compliment to the ignorant negroes, who have once more been deceived by demagogues, that they should show themselves to be so completely at the mercy of not only carpet-baggers and scalawags but of every unprincipled retailer of humbugs who attempted to make fools of them."⁴⁵ Replying to the New York *Tribune* which charged Virginia with repudiation the same editor said on the following day: "The Readjusters, or Repudiators, as the *Tribune* prefers to call them, owe their election to negro votes, that is to say, to Republican votes. The best of the white Republicans endeavored to induce the negroes to vote for the election of Debt-Payers; but all their efforts availed nothing."⁴⁶ The Lynchburg *Virginian* was reported on November 8 as having said: "But for this last element (negroes) that, notwithstanding what Fred Douglass, President Hayes, and others of their party high in authority, told them—which advice they disregarded to go with the repudiators—we should today be able to announce a splendid victory for the Debt-Payers."⁴⁷ Referring to this a little later the same editor said: "Not over twenty-five colored Republican votes were cast in this city for the Debt-Paying candidates, but the most of those who went to the poles voted for a ticket that scarcely one reputable white Republican in this city could or would support by reason of the fact that a convicted felon was at its head."⁴⁸ The Lynchburg *News*, according to the *Dispatch* of November 10, said: "We have to some extent been deceived again as to what the negroes would do. Their whole vote for the Debt-

⁴⁵ *Dispatch*, November 6, 1879.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, December, November 7, 1879.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, November 8, 1879.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, November 10, 1879.

Paying candidates would not furnish representation for one delegate to the Legislature. We cannot rely on this vote in any election. They have shown that as a class—a body—they will vote for any man, no matter whence he comes, or who he is, provided he opposes the Conservative party.”⁴⁹

The close cooperation of the Negroes with the Readjusters was at first denied, but in the elections of 1881, 1883, there was little effort made to explain away the alignment of the Negroes. In 1884, moreover, William Mahone, the head of Readjuster machine, appeared under the banner of the Republican Party of Virginia. This fulfilled the early prediction of the Conservative press. Referring to the Readjuster victory of 1881 the editor of the *Dispatch* had said:⁵⁰ “But it was a Republican victory in another sense. It was won by Republican votes. The negroes of Virginia who are all Republicans, have not manifested as much interest in any election as in this. There are some localities in which a small number of negroes voted the Democratic ticket as in Hanover, Lynchburg, Loudon, and a few other places. But those were exceptions to the general rule. Even in Berryville, Clarke County, we learn that though some negroes voted for Daniel, the Cameron vote of that place consisted of seventy-one negroes and only six whites. The negroes being, as we have said, Republicans, and having triumphed over the Democrats, it follows that the victory was a Republican victory. It is all nonsense to call it a Readjuster triumph. If the Readjusters repudiate the debt this winter or settle it, as they say they will, where then will be any place for a Readjuster party? There is no demand for such a party, and it may be set down as certain, that it has appeared for the last time before the voters in its character as a Readjuster Party.”⁵¹

Taking up the topic two days later the editor said: “It wa a Republican victory. It is recognized as such by every Republican in the United States as well as by every true

⁴⁹ *Dispatch*, November 10, 1879.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1881.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1881.

Democrat. It was also, of course, a negro victory. Some papers estimate that five percent of the so-called Readjuster votes of last Tuesday were cast by whites and ninety-five percent by negroes. It ought to be enough for the white men of Virginia to know that even a majority of the votes which defeated them were cast by negroes."⁵²

The Negroes, however, cannot be charged with base motives or lack of wisdom for supporting the Readjuster party. They were trying to improve their condition. They had fallen far short of their expectations from the reconstruction of the State. The Conservatives in control had merely assigned them a place instead of granting them full rights. Their right to vote and to hold office had brought them little in the face of an overgrown Conservative party playing up color as the main factor in politics. For almost a decade they had been deceived and intimidated. Their schools never reached the number to which they were entitled by apportionment according to population, the teachers had not been regularly paid, and some of their schools had been closed for lack of funds. They had no higher institution of learning for the training of leaders. For ordinary offences they could be punished at the public whipping post or made to labor with ball and chain. The insane of the blacks were confined in the jails for lack of a State asylum. Negroes were denied service on juries. The financial depression which bore heavily upon the Negroes as well as the poor whites, moreover, aggravated their complaints.⁵³

Now to get the Negro vote the Readjuster promised the redress of these grievances. In 1881 William Mahone, the moving spirit of the party, had difficulty in convincing the Negroes as to whether he was a Conservative or Democrat,⁵⁴ but he won them by opposing the aristocratic control of government and denouncing the suppression of the Negro vote.⁵⁵ To counteract the influence of the Readjusters over

⁵² *Dispatch*, November 13, 1881.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 29, 1873; Dec. 2, 1878; March 11, 1879.

⁵⁴ *Whig*, January, 1881.

⁵⁵ *Dispatch*, June 4, 1881.

the Negroes, moreover, the Funders brought themselves to a declaration for equality of right and justice, fair elections, and jury service of both races. The election, however, went to the Readjusters, who immediately enacted measures which pleased the Negroes. They repealed the law making the payment of the poll tax a requirement for voting, abolished the Moffet Register law for a return to the liquor license, diminished the tax rate on general property from fifty to forty cents, and authorized a new assessment of realty to lighten the burden on the poor. Shifting the support of the State to wealth they forced the collection of delinquent taxes, required settlements from county treasurers, and the payment of long-standing claims of the State against railroads. Education was especially favored. The diversion of the school funds to other purposes ceased, and monies to which the schools had long been entitled were turned over to the Department of Education. \$100,000 with a stipulated annual allowance was appropriated for the establishment of the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute in fulfilment of Mahone's pledge that the Readjuster party would establish a higher institution of learning for Negroes. A building for the accommodation of Negro lunatics was also provided for in keeping with the pledge to bring to an end the customary incarceration of such persons in county jails. The poll tax was repealed, the whipping post was abolished, mechanics and artisans were given the protection of the law, corporations were brought under stricter regulations, and social uplift was encouraged by the grant of charters to such agencies. The Negro was not treated racially but justly along with others. The Readjusters did not claim to be interested in race, but in a square deal for the poor. In this way the party attracted sufficient whites and Negroes to dominate the State for a decade through an efficient political machine controlled by William Mahone doing more successfully through Federal patronage what the Conservatives had been doing through fraud and intimidation. Negroes shared the spoils.

The Negroes, however, made no substantial gains in political recognition under these friends rebaptized as Readjust-

ers. This attitude of the machine toward the freedmen continued in spite of the claims for more recognition from educated Negroes like attorneys W. C. Roane, R. Peel Brooks and Dr. Thomas Bayne. Nothing illustrates this better than the firm opposition of some partisans to the candidacy of John Mercer Langston for Congress. Langston was born a slave in Virginia in 1829, but was emancipated upon the death of his father when Langston was a mere child. By his father's will he was sent to the State of Ohio to be educated. He entered Oberlin College where he completed the course by 1849. He then studied law under Sherlock J. Andrews of Cleveland, Ohio; but abandoned this method of study for a course in the Theological Department of Oberlin, which he finished in 1863. He then resumed his study of law under Philemon Bliss of Elyria, Ohio, and was admitted to practice there the following year. He followed this profession in that State until the year 1867 when he was invited by General O. O. Howard to act as the General Inspector of the Schools of Freedmen. From this position he was called to a professorship in the Law Department of Howard University. He then became dean and later served as vice-president of that institution. In 1877 he was appointed minister to Haiti, in which position he served until 1885. He returned to this country to practice his profession, but soon thereafter accepted the presidency of the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute. It was while serving in this position that he took an active part in politics and in spite of the bitter opposition of the Republican machine secured the nomination and election to Congress. His seat was contested by his opponent, and it was not until a few months before the expiration of his term that he won his title; but in the services which he was permitted to render during the short period he made the impression of a scholarly and forceful speaker on the important questions before Congress at that time.

The Negroes never thereafter gained another such advantage. Southern States had already put into operation a system of intimidation and fraud by which the power of

the Negroes at the polls was nullified. Virginia soon fell into line with these policies. Miss Van Lew of Richmond said in 1872 that there were as many as 200 Negroes in the penitentiary for no other crime than that of being Republicans.⁵⁶ A native white informed Sir George Campbell that whatever seats the Negroes obtained in the legislature they got by "hard voting" and he admitted "that when the Democrats are hard put to it they sometimes manipulate a good deal in the counting of the votes."⁵⁷ The native whites generally endeavored to prevent the registration of Negro voters and the casting of their ballots. Tired of the trouble of these corrupt practices,⁵⁸ they endeavored to make this procedure legal. In this they were encouraged by the unconstitutional decision of the spineless United States Supreme Court to nullify the Civil Rights laws and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. By a special act of the legislature a generation later the Negroes were segregated in traveling on the common carriers in violation of the Constitution of the United States. In 1902, moreover, after the State had been successfully governed for thirty-four years under the Underwood Constitution a convention was called to change the frame of government for important purposes, chief among which was to disfranchise the Negro through intelligence and property tests.

The Negroes of Virginia, however, cannot be charged with the mistakes in the reconstruction of the State. White men, the majority of whom were Virginians themselves, were the officeholders in Virginia during the reconstruction. The number of Negroes elected to office never became sufficient to determine any definite policy of the government except in a few cases of exercising a balance of power between militant factions. Those Negroes who attained office, moreover, were generally persons of intelligence or common sense and they gave a good account of themselves. Among these should be mentioned Peter G. Morgan and J. P. Evans of Petersburg,

⁵⁶ *Dispatch*, January 5, 1872. See also the *Enquirer*, Sept. 18, 1867, for the case of William Tanner.

⁵⁷ Campbell, *White and Black*, 282.

⁵⁸ Rowell, *Contested Elections*, *op. cit.*

Caesar Perkins of Buckingham County, Dr. Thomas Bayne and Teamoh of Norfolk, and Lewis Lindsay of Richmond. The actual worth of these men cannot be determined by the notices of their careers in the press. Local newspapers did everything in their power to hold them up to ridicule and officers of the law tried to embarrass them. This was especially true in the way they treated Frank Moss, R. D. Ruffin, O. L. Thompson, and Cornelius Harris.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Dispatch*, Aug. 26, 1870; July 1, November 21, 1873; Feb. 28, September 28, October 28, 1875.

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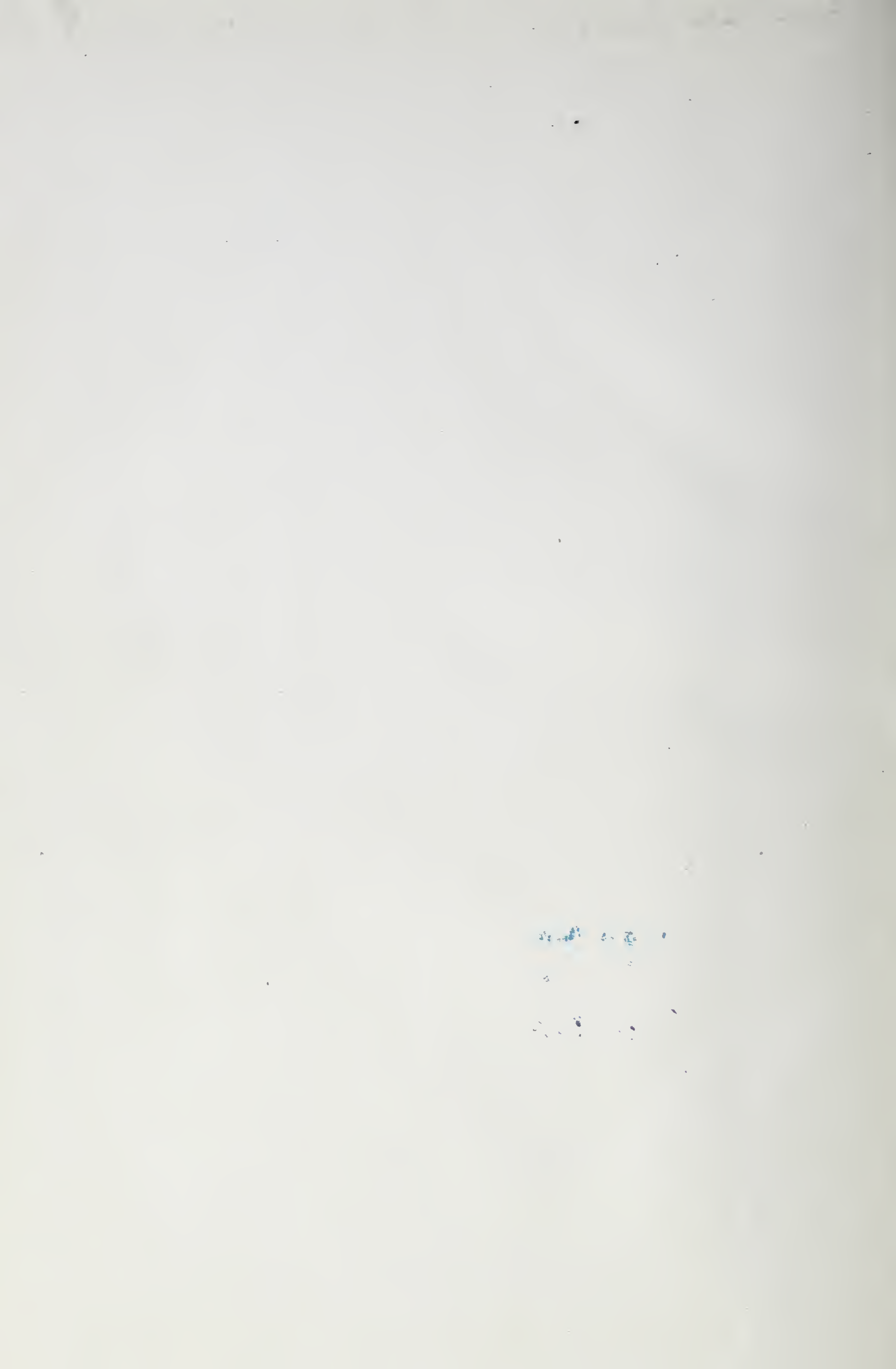
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